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December 1988

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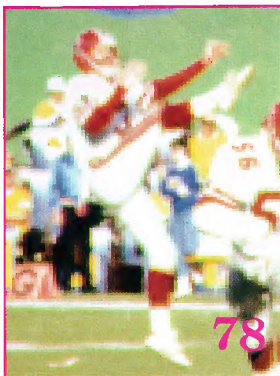
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Publisher's Letter



This holiday season, video games, again, are hot stuff. Updated technology has brought improved, colorful graphics, great sound, fantastic background music and fun game play into the hands of everyone. The editors of VideoGames and Computer Entertainment have been game fanatics since Pong hit the streets in the early 1970s and have also been involved in every facet of video and computer entertainment. The writers of this magazine have developed game play concepts, designed and produced graphics and sound, and even programmed the games themselves. Not to mention the thousands of hours we've enjoyed playing the games.

Which brings us to this issue. We've wanted to share our enthusiasm and experience with the millions of others who also enjoy this interest. This being our premiere issue, we are launching the magazine with our first video-game buyer's guide. Future issues will include many more features, strategy guides, hints and reviews.

And computer owners will find expanded coverage of games for their systems, whatever they own. With the popularity of computer entertainment, we intend to greatly increase the number of pages dedicated to Apple, Macintosh, Atari, Amiga, Commodore and PC systems. We hope you enjoy this first issue. Stay tuned!

Lee H. Pappas

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by David Plotkin and Lee H. Pappas

The three premiere game machines that have captured the lion's share of the current market are all sold by video-game giants: Atari, Nintendo and Sega. Each of these game systems is an excellent entertainment value and will provide hours of video-gaming enjoyment. They are, however, very different—each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The Nintendo offering was originally introduced in Japan, where it is enormously popular. As a result, a very good selection of game cartridges is available. Another plus is the Nintendo-sponsored "third party" development program. This has put dozens of new games on the market, with many more to come, covering nearly every topic imaginable. The Nintendo is the smallest in size of the three units, and fits nicely into a tight space. The cartridges may be difficult to insert by very young children, however.

While the graphics and sound effects in most of the Nintendo compatible games are excellent, many also utilize musical scores, playing in the background, which are incredible. Nintendo also excels in adventure-type games. The *Legend of Zelda*, *Metroid*, *Kid Icarus* and *Blaster Master* are only some examples. These games contain a wealth of detail, and also provide the player with a goal; a sense of purpose in finishing a game. Many also provide the means to stop playing a game, then resume at a later date close to the point where the player left off.

The Nintendo can be purchased several ways: the base system consisting of the game console with controllers, the base system, light gun and a dual-game cartridge containing the enormously popular *Super Mario Brothers* and *Duck Hunt*, or

the *Power Set* with the base system, dual cartridge, zapper gun and *World Class Track Meet*, which is used with the *Power Pad* (also included).

The Sega system is larger in size. While the sound and music are good, the graphics are slightly superior compared to the Nintendo; the Sega can display 64 colors to Nintendo's 52. The controls for the Nintendo and Sega are small pads, versus the Atari's joystick. However, optional Nintendo (Advantage) and Sega (Control Stick) controls do offer some very good alternate options. Although several different joysticks for the Atari are widely available inexpensively, the Nintendo and Sega sticks allow for some options (such as two buttons, Start button, Turbo, Pause, etc.) which are not provided for on Atari sticks. Options from Nintendo include an accurate light gun, an interactive "power pad" and a robot. The Nintendo robot is used only by a limited number of games and is now in the process of being phased out.

The games for the Sega come in three different memory sizes, the smallest ("Sega Cards") tend to be graphically simple. The largest (two-Mega) cartridges have very nice backgrounds and complex play mechanics. The Sega comes standard with a light gun and *Safari/Hang On* cartridge. A unique attachment for the Sega is the 3-D glasses which are available as an option, that provides some incredible visual effects. Sega is also now working with outside developers to expand its already huge game-title list. If you are considering a Nintendo system, it would be well worth your while to check out the Sega Video Game.

The Atari XE Game Machine is a restyled version of Atari's 8-bit computer line. This is both

good and bad. The graphics on this machine, while still quite good, are not as bright and colorful as either of the other two. The animation is also more limited. On the other hand, since it comes with a computer keyboard, games as complex as the included *Flight Simulator* are possible.

Furthermore, programmers have explored the limits of the Atari machine much more than the other two game machines, and have produced some remarkable effects and dynamite sound. Another positive aspect is that a huge number of games and simulations are available, although most of these are on disk. The number of cartridges is still relatively small, and some of the cartridges need a disk drive to explore all their possibilities. For example, *Lode Runner*, a game where you guide a man through 150 screens of obstacles, allows you to construct your own screens. To save a screen, however, you must have a disk drive.

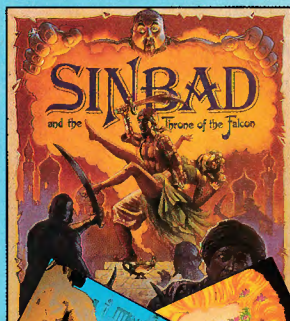
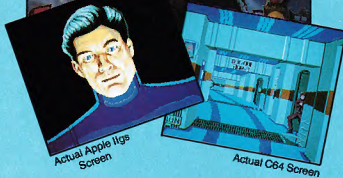
Adding a disk drive turns the XEGS into the full-featured computer it really is. Not only is there an almost unlimited number of games, but applications such as spreadsheets, word processing and databases also become available. Of course, none of these can be used with the other game machines.

The joystick ports on the XEGS are very hard to get to, so you'll want to leave your stick plugged in. The Atari unit also takes up quite a bit of room because of the keyboard. The XEGS comes standard with *Flight Simulator*, *Missile Command* (built-in), *Bug Hunt*, a joystick and the light gun. Also built-in is Atari BASIC; a good programming language should you ever add a disk drive and decide to program your "game machine."



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Compiled by Joyce Worley

Freedom Stick Frees up Game Play

The hottest joystick controller from Camrca, Ltd., is *The Freedom Stick*, a completely wireless remote controller. It uses infrared technology to let players move up to 20 feet from the screen without wires. Special features include an automatic rapid-fire with manual action and two action buttons. The eight-direction joystick shaft fits comfortably in the hand, and the entire controller is lightweight enough to make hand-held play comfortable.

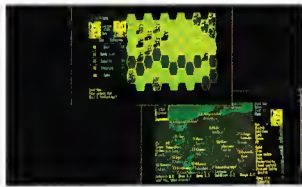
The stick comes packed with an infrared receiver with universal adaptor to make it compatible with Nintendo, Sega, Atari and Commodore, and four suction cups so you can attach it to the floor or a desk top. But most players will choose to hold this baby on their lap or in their hands to enjoy the freedom of movement provided by the Freedom Stick. It retails for \$69.95, and requires four AA batteries for operation.



Japan Comes To America

American gamers can expect to see at least a few Japanese titles on their retailers' shelves this fall. Koei Corp. opened offices in Torrance, California, this summer to sell *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, a military, economic and diplomatic simulation of 2nd Century China which won wide acclaim when introduced in Japan. Koei's second offering is *Nobunaga's Ambition*, a 16th Century recreation of the struggle to unite Japan's warring states that Koei says is the all-time best-selling game ever introduced.

Sierra On-Line has also been eyeing the East. The California company licensed *Silphed* from Game Arts of Japan, a science-fictional super dogfighter by the same people who created *Thexder*. An arcade-style game, *Silphed* puts the gamer in the action seat in 20 levels.



Video-game scope

Atari to Release 45 New Video Games

According to Michael Katz, president of Atari Corp., 45 new video-game titles will be added to the company's library this year. New games will be released for the XE game system, the 7800 system and for the Atari 2600.

Nineteen titles are coming for the XE game system. Some of the highlights joystick jocks can look forward to include *Gato*, the submarine combat computer game by Spectrum Holobyte; *Ace of Aces*, from the air combat game by Accolade; and *Into the Eagles Nest*, the combat mission designed by Pandora. Other titles forthcoming for the XE include *Commando*, *Karateka*, *Food Fight* and *Necromancer*.

New game titles slated for the 7800 include *Dark Chambers*, *Desert Falcon*, *Impossible Mission*, *Winter Games*, *Summer Games*, *Hat Trick* and *Super Baseball*.

Among the titles scheduled for the 2600 are *Crossbow*, from the Exidy coin-op game by the same name, and *Sprintmaster*, a car race with nine track configurations.



Broderbund and Nippon Companies Launch Kyodai

Broderbund joined with 11 Japanese firms to form Kyodai Software Marketing Inc. The new firm, headquartered in San Rafael, California, will convert, manufacture, publish and market popular Japanese software for North American sale.

The new company plans to publish a dozen programs, most of which will be entertainment titles, during its first year. The programs will bear their original Japanese brand name, as well as the Kyodai imprint.

This makes Broderbund's second Japanese venture. The company founded Broderbund Japan in 1986, with offices in Tokyo. The far-eastern arm of the California publisher develops and markets Japanese versions of American software.

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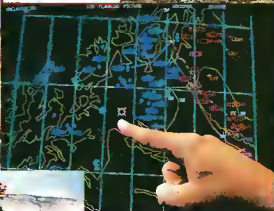
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Game scope Game Biz Boom

More people are playing computer games than ever before, according to figures just released by the Software Publishers Association (SPA). During the first six months of 1988, sales for the entire computer software business totalled \$1.82 billion, an increase of 51% over the same period in 1987.

Sales of entertainment software increased 27% during this period. According to the SPA report, MS-DOS accounted for \$43.1 million; Apple II \$20.3 million; Macintosh \$5.6 million; Commodore \$32.3 million, and other systems \$12.7 million; for a total of \$114.1 million in retail sales.

MS-DOS sales represented the largest increase in sales for the six months covered, with a 60.2% increase over the same period in 1987. Apple II sales increased 10.9%, Macintosh, 20.3%; Commodore, 15.5%; and a 3.1% increase for other systems.

Tynesoft Turns to American Designs

Tynesoft, a British software publishing company founded in 1985, is expanding its operation to include designs created in America, then executed by the English in-house staff of programmers, artists and musicians. The international talents combined to develop four games this year, with more currently coming down the line.

Titles created in this unique partnership between American and British artists include *Circus Games*, which lets compu-stunters train tigers, fly on the trapeze, walk tightrope and do trick riding. According to a VG&CE scoop, *Circus Games* will be licensed later this year for sale by an American publishing firm.

Tynesoft says the American-British connection will produce three other titles this year, *Mayday Squad*, *First Person Pinball*, and *I Was Kidnapped By A Flying Saucer*.

Mindscape Is out for Blood

Captain Blood, that is. Mindscape captured the American license for the dramatic adventure game developed by Philippe Ulrich and Didier Bouchon of Infogrames. This French software company already has hits in America with *Pinball Wizard* and *Bubble Ghost* (both published in the USA by Accolade).

Captain Blood is a giant science-fiction creation, containing a galaxy and 14 unique races. The graphics feature an alien control panel and a bony finger that triggers each function. Flights through hyperspace are reminiscent of journeys in *2001* or *Dr. Who*. Coupled with excellent music and sound effects, an icon-based language and a story that captures the imagination, the innovative graphic effects make this a must-see.



Pete Rose Has Pennant Fever

Gamestar's *Pete Rose Pennant Fever* gives players their own expansion team, in a 24-team league. Eight different viewing angles (behind the plate, at each base and four from the outfield) are realistically created, and gamers call plays and pitches, control the lineup and make substitutions. It goes a step beyond the on-field action, with a financial component to the game. General Managers must maintain control of their club's purse strings and set salaries for the home-run heroes.

Pete Rose Pennant Fever uses many of Rose's real-life game strategies for field management to let players pitch, hit, run, field, throw and steal realistically, in an action-strategy combination with on-field players' performances affected by their real-life statistics. The sports simulation is available for MS-DOS and Commodore 64 personal computers.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

The most anticipated products in the history of computer gaming have finally reached the home market. The first two officially licensed computer programs based on TSR's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* are now available from Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI).

SSI collaborated with TSR to create *Pool of Radiance* first for the Commodore 64, followed by IBM and Apple II. *Pool of Radiance* lets gamers use a party provided on disk, or roll six characters from four classes, six races and nine alignments. Non-player characters can be added to bring the party to eight adventurers, who must attempt to rid the realm of monsters. Personalized combat figures, well-illustrated cities, dungeons and encounters, and an intriguing theme combine for authentic AD&D-style gaming.

For the second game, SSI entered a pact with U.S. Gold, a London entertainment software producer, to create joystick-controlled action games based on TSR's AD&D. The first action title under the agreement, *Heroes of the Lance*, will be released for Amiga, Commodore, Atari ST and MS-DOS. U.S. Gold has exclusive distribution rights in En-

gland and Europe, and SSI will publish and market the game in the USA. Viewed inside perspective, heroes battle monsters in hand-to-hand combat as they attempt to retrieve platinum disks guarded by an evil black dragon.

The third D&D product on the agenda from SSI is *Dungeon Masters Assistant, Vol. I: Encounters*. This is a utility designed to help *Dungeon Masters* create personalized campaigns. It contains encounters, monsters and characters, including all monsters from the AD&D Monster Manuals I and II. It lets DMs modify the data provided and add their own inventions and encounters to the already extensive database.



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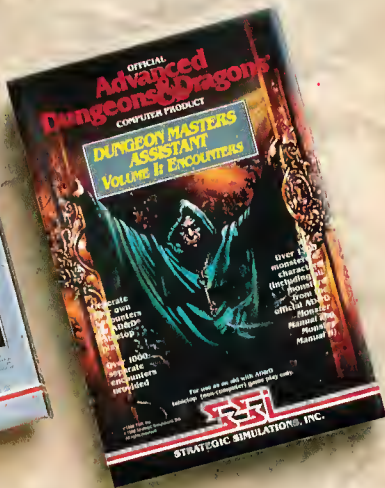


Action

HEROES OF THE LANCE gives you non-stop excitement and fully animated action on the mystical **DRAGONLANCE®** game world. Guide eight Companions, each with different skills, deep into the treacherous ruins of the temple Xak Tsaroth. They will need all of your skills to help them survive the attacks of giant spiders, demons, dragons and countless other terrors. Retrieve the

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Mishakal if
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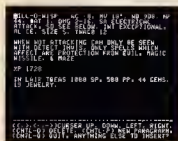


Utility

DUNGEON MASTERS ASSISTANT, VOLUME 1: ENCOUNTERS is a utility program designed to help Dungeon Masters generate encounters for **AD&D®** campaigns. It provides more than 1000 encounters, and over 1300 monsters and characters, including all of the monsters found in **AD&D® Monster Manuals I & II**. DMs can modify the existing data and add original

monsters
and encoun-
ters to the
database.

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How To Order: Visit your retailer or call 1-800-245-4525. To receive SSI's complete product catalog, please send \$1.00 to: Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1046 N. Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043.



STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.

CIRCLE #111 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



Sega Spotlights 3-D

The SegaScope 3-D game system features the Sega 3-D glasses. The first-ever 3-D glasses to use LCD technology, they plug directly into the power base, then synchronize the gamer's vision with the computer and the software.

The SegaScope 3-D System comes with the Power Base, two control pads, the Sega Light Phaser and the high-tech glasses. *Missile Defense 3-D* is resident in the Power Base.



Activision Adds Two to 2600 Catalog

Two licensed arcade hits are newly available from Activision for the Atari 2600. Both feature high action and are surprisingly faithful to their coin-op antecedents.

Commando makes a gamer take a solo stance against battling rebel forces, armed with just a machine gun and hand grenades. The opposing troops approach faster and faster, and the vertical scrolling heightens the illusion of advancing toward the rebel stronghold.

Kung Fu Master starts the gamer with three lives in a martial arts test against countless opponents. The quest takes the battling hero through five floors of the wizard's temple to rescue the (inevitable) maiden held captive there.



World-game scope SPA Goes to Japan

The Software Publishers Association (SPA) conducted a trip to the World Software Conference sponsored by the Japan Personal Computer Software Association (JPSA). The meeting featured a five-day software exhibit of over 70 Japanese and American programs.

Conferences and panels briefed attendees on the Japanese market, and optimistic cooperation was the theme of the show. According to figures presented there, the majority of software in Japan is imported. The Japanese market is said to be only one-sixth the size of the USA market, but analysts project that by the year 2000, Japan will import 30.2 million units of software.

American publishers see the Land of the Rising Sun as a golden sales opportunity; almost a dozen publishers have already opened Japanese offices in the Island Nation. More firms are expected to ink deals for Far East marketing before the end of the year.

Let's Zork Again Like We Did Last Summer

According to Infocom, *Zork* is the all-time best-selling entertainment software product, with almost one million copies sold. Now fans of the original adventure, which expanded through two sequels, can look forward to a fourth in the series, *Zork Zero: The Revenge of Megaboz*.

The latest Zorkian adventure is a prequel to the *Zork Trilogy*, and uncovers the history of the empire. According to Infocom, the game "strained their new development system to the limit" and is the largest in size and scope of any of their titles to date. It has over 200 locations, is said to have as many puzzles as all the rest of the Zorkian mind teasers together, and contains graphic features, such as puzzles, on-screen hints and an on-screen map.

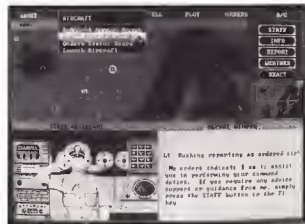
Zork Zero casts the gamer as a fortune hunter in the capital city of Flatheadia, trying to gain reward, remove the curse that threatens the kingdom and, in general, save the day.

Zork Zero will soon be available for most home computers, including the Macintosh, Apple II, Apple IIGS and MS-DOS this Fall, and early in 1989, for the Atari ST, Amiga, and Commodore 64, for \$49.95.

No Détente on the Compu-Seas

Three-Sixty's naval warfare simulation, *Harpoon*, gives gamers a full-color database of more than 100 weapons systems, then puts them on deck as Commander of the Nato Task Force in the North Atlantic. Washington, D.C. Naval Analyst Larry Bond collaborated with the software company to create authentic details, including performance, deployment and tactical use, as the commander views U.S. and Soviet weapons in great detail. An on-screen staff assistant leads the user through each scenario, as it replicates modern naval warfare. Maps, geographical overviews, climatic conditions and weapon systems are available for constant monitoring, and ten separate battle set scenarios gradually build in difficulty as more ships, planes and submarines enter the fray.

Harpoon features pulldown menus and pop-up windows, and a great deal of authentic information about each weapon, even those of the Soviet Union. IBM, Macintosh and Amiga versions will be on dealers' shelves for the holiday buying season.



Nolan Goes Home

Axlon Chairman Nolan Bushnell has signed an agreement to design and develop video games for the Atari 2600 and 7800 game systems. In his comments about his return to the company he founded, Bushnell said, "I'm very excited at the prospect of working again in the home video-game industry, especially with my alma mater, Atari. I hope my contributions will add to the strong rebound in the industry."

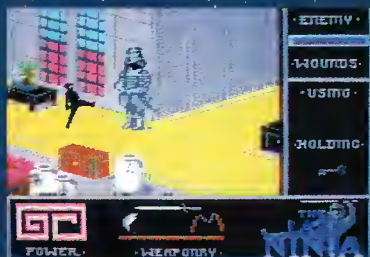
Nolan founded Atari in 1972 after introducing the game *Pong*. He sold the company to Warner Communications in 1976. Since that date, he founded Axlon (in 1983) for the manufacture and development of toys and coin-op games.



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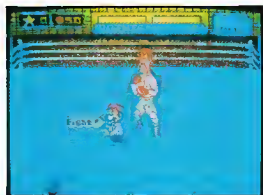
CIYAA



Video-game scope Sports Headline Nintendo Action

A pair of new games from Nintendo puts sports simulations high on the NESer's hit list this fall. *Ice Hockey* lets one or two players choose teams from USA, Sweden, Poland, Canada, USSR or Czechoslovakia. The game has five speed settings, and periods of play can be seven, ten or 15 minutes. The gamer selects four players from a lineup of changing physical features, then teams face off at center ice in a high-action simulation of the sport.

Mike Tyson's Punch Out lets the gamer advance the ranking of Little Mac, the on-screen boxer-surrogate, as he fights 13 bouts in the minor, major and world circuits. Gamers who defeat the contenders win a dream match against the champion. Lots of fancy frills make the game more fun. The statistics screen provides information on Little Mac and his current opponent, including ranking, age, weight and record. Between rounds, an illustrated dialogue screen provides hints about the boxers' conditions. The action screen is where it all happens, though, when



the players meet in the ring. Gamers use the buttons to throw right and left body blows or punches to the face, and the direction rosette makes Mac dodge right or left or duck.

Money talks

Big Bucks for Biz

The game biz is booming, causing companies to scramble for bucks to finance expansion plans. A steady stream of investment money is flowing into the entertainment software industry, as forward-looking CEOs cap deals for capital. Here are three companies with plumper purses, thanks to recently completed financial arrangements.

Epyx secured an additional \$8 million in equity financing to be used for development and initial marketing expenditures for new products. Epyx CEO David Morse predicted the financing would enable the company to become a leader in interactive video software and electronic entertainment products. Morse predicted that Epyx, with 1987 sales of \$27 million, should attain their long-range goal of \$100 million in sales by 1990.

Mindscape went public with an initial offering of 1,100,000 shares of Common Stock at \$9 per share. The company announced plans to use the income generated by the sale to repay bank debts. This represents a continuation of the Mindscape growth spurt. Last year the company acquired the CBS Interactive Learning software unit, the educational

software line of Learning Well and (in 1986) the assets of Scarborough Systems. In 1988, Mindscape inked its first affiliated label agreement with Practical Software, attained rights to publish backlist games by Strategic Simulations, Inc., (including the classics *Fortress* and *Nam*), became a licensee to produce Nintendo cartridges and secured rights to publish games based on Atari and Sega coin-ops.

Money is big news on the video-game side as well. Acclaim Entertainment merged with Gamma Capital Corp., which resulted in the video-game cartridge company becoming a publicly owned entity. Acclaim's net revenues for the nine-month period ending May 1988 were about \$25 million. Acclaim introduced several licensed products this year for play on the Nintendo Entertainment System, among them, *Rambo*, licensed from the hit movies. The company signed an agreement with MCA (a division of Universal City Studios) for *Airwolf's* jump from TV to the NES screen. In a third major licensing deal, the gamemaker acquired rights from the WWF to market *WWF Wrestlingmania*, with Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Andre the Giant and other superstars of wrestling, for the Nintendo.

Nintendo Named

Nintendo of America was named "Vendor of the Year," an award presented by the Home Express chain of West Coast retail stores. According to Scot Bauhofer, speaking for Home Express at the presentation, "We have developed this award to honor not only our most important vendors, but the vendor who has given us the most merchandising support throughout the year." Bauhofer went on to say, "We feel strongly that Nintendo plays a significant part in our current success."

Peter Main, marketing vice president for Nintendo, accepted the award. In his remarks, he credited Nintendo's merchandising force, inventory tracking system and product demonstration units, and expressed pleasure at Home Express' sales success. "We're proud of this award," he concluded, "and appreciate the recognition."

First Row Honeymooners in the Twilight Zone

First Row Publishing will release two computer titles based on famous TV shows this autumn. *Jackie Gleason's The Honeymooners* is an interactive role-playing game that will attempt to capture the humor of the classic series.

First Row's second license is for games based on *The Twilight Zone*. The first adventure is said to contain a bizarre story line and a twist ending, true to the spirit of the science fiction/fantasy series that inspired the game.

The *Honeymooners* will be available this fall on the Amiga, for \$39.95. The *Twilight Zone* is currently available for Amiga, and versions for MS-DOS and Commodore computers will follow soon.



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Spectrum Holobyte Takes Cards off Table

Spectrum Holobyte has taken the cards off the table and put them on the computer screen, in one of the most satisfying card programs ever devised for home games. *Solitaire Royale* gives gamers their choice of ten card backs and five card facestyles, then takes all the labor out of the most popular solo card games. The computer shuffles and deals eight popular versions: Pyramid, Golf, Corners, Reno, 3 Shuffles & A Draw, Canfield, Calculation and Klondike. Three children's games, Concentration, Pairs and The Wish, are also included.

The game is enhanced by special features. Play can be right or left-handed, and stacks can be moved either by dragging cards or point-and-click. Games can be backed up a move, restarted and players can even peek inside a stack of cards. A tournament mode is available for competitive solitaires.

Solitaire Royale features beautifully drawn graphics and exciting sound effects (cards being dealt, applause for wins). Some versions even let the user change the background colors. This classic, similar in feeling to last year's star game, Shanghai (Activision), is available for the Macintosh 512K, the Mac II and MS-DOS. Amiga and Apple versions will follow soon.



Activision Takes New Name

Activision changed its corporate name to Mediagenic to "symbolize the company's expanding and diversified product lines." Spokesmen indicated the name change also signalled the end of a revitalization turnaround period, during which the company returned to profitability and established strategies for future products in other electronic media formats, like HyperCard, video and CD-ROM.

The name Activision will not disappear, however. That familiar moniker will continue to be used for video games and for action and simulation entertainment software.

Activision was the world's first third-party software house, creating cartridges for play on the Atari 2600 in 1979. Currently, Activision's product line includes most other popular computer and video-game formats, such as Apple, MS-DOS, Commodore, Nintendo, Atari and Sega.

SPA Names Certifications

The Software Publishers Association has certified the games listed below, platinum, gold and silver, as shown. Platinum labels go to those which sell more than 250,000 copies, gold labels represent sales of more than 100,000 copies, and silver labels go to games which sold more than 50,000 copies. (Products with sales more than 500,000 copies, if any, will be certified diamond sellers.)

The most recent programs to go platinum were: *Advanced Flight Trainer*—Electronic Arts; *California Games*—Epyx; *Gunship*—MicroProse; *Pinball Construction Set*—Electronic Arts; *Summer Games I*—Epyx; *Winter Games*—Epyx.

Games receiving gold certification were: *Destroyer*—Epyx; *NBA Championship Basketball: 2-on-2*—Mediagenic; *Jumpman*—Epyx; *Jumpman, Jr.*—Epyx; *King's Quest III*—Sierra; *Pit Stop*—Epyx; *Pit Stop II*—Epyx; *Space Quest—Sierra*; *Sub Battle Simulator*—Epyx; *Temple of Apshai*—Epyx; *Texder*—Sierra; *World Games*—Epyx; *World's Greatest Baseball*—Epyx.

Games which attained silver certification were: *Airborne Ranger*—MicroProse and *Pirates!*—MicroProse.



Software Mfg. Gambles for Profit

California Dreams is staking a lot on casino-style computer games. Three titles introduced this year by the software publisher give compu-gamblers a chance to learn and play these popular games at home.

Vegas Gambler is a four-in-one trip to Las Vegas. Blackjack uses standard casino rules and betting practices. Video poker looks just like its coin-eating cousins and Roulette puts a simulation of the betting table on screen, topped by a spinning wheel. Slot machine, like the one-armed bandits it echoes, has no skill component, but nice visuals and good sounds make it an attractive addition to the disk.

Vegas Craps lets players place bets for or against the lucky shooter, on a table that exactly simulates the game in casinos. Variations in betting styles echo real life, and the program is suitable for use in mastering Craps before trying the real thing.

Club Backgammon features a beautifully articulated on-screen board. Two humans can play against each other, or one gamer can compete against the three-level computer opponent. The automated scorekeeper betting routines and game log which keep track of all moves made during the competition, make it a pleasant player.

All three titles will be available this fall for Commodore and Apple II (\$29.95); Atari ST (\$34.95); MS-DOS, Apple IIGS and Amiga (\$39.95).



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1989 Buyer's Guide

With over 150 games available for the Nintendo, Sega and Atari game systems, it is difficult to know what's available, what's good and what's bad. It's just too confusing, especially if you can't see or play a game before purchasing it. We attempted to obtain every game we could, scrutinizing, comparing, analyzing, winning and losing.

What we came up with (besides sore wrists) was a rating system. Six categories were selected and used.

Playability indicates how well all of the elements work when put together. When the graphics, sound, music, action and strategy are all added up, is the game good, and is it fun?

Action How much is going on in the game? Obviously a game of golf isn't going to be loaded with fast-moving action, but a game of hockey had better be!

Strategy If a game requires no thought on the player's part, the game will usually become dull and boring quickly. More strategy frequently means more challenge.

Graphics Great graphics don't necessarily mean a great game, and poor graphics don't always mean a poor game. But colorful and elaborate graphics never fail to disappoint and always add something to the game.

Sound Today's games are expected to have realistic and interesting sound effects. Again, when this element is present, it is never a minus, but can only be a plus.

Music More and more games have elaborate "sound tracks." Many games even allow you to select from several scores, or even shut them off. And the music in the games has to really be heard—some are downright amazing.

The rating system runs from 1 to 4:

1 =poor **2** =average **3** =good **4** =excellent

Also, we rate four categories: Adventure, Action, Sports and Educational. Adventure typically covers games where the player has a goal to reach or task to accomplish. These games also have an end to them.

Action games are shoot-'em-ups or fast-paced.

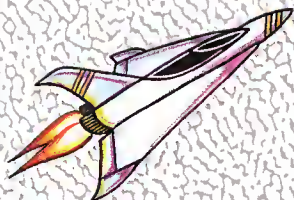
Sports covers everything from archery to zeppelin races.

Educational refers to games that have some learning/teaching qualities to them.

Games that don't have rating charts weren't available to us, or were in pre-release stages, not suitable for a fair review. At the end of the sections are previews of games which will be available late this year or in 1989. We'll have more exciting reports on these very soon! Upcoming issues will have complete information on what's hot and coming to a video-game system near you!



Buyer's 1989 Guide



Nintendo



KEY

Action	=	Orange
Sports	=	Green
Educational	=	Purple
Adventure	=	Blue

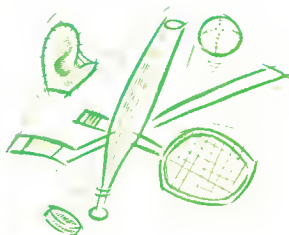
Bases Loaded

by Jaleco



One of the best sellers for the Nintendo in Japan, where baseball is very popular. This game is designed to be realistic with baseball teams that have their own character and style. And realistic "voices" add to the effect. The umpire calls the plays, balls, strikes, fouls and time out. The crowd rumbles and roars. You control the pitch as well as batting.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Blades of Steel

by Konami



The puck drops and you are on your way in this fast-paced hockey game. Just like in real hockey, tempers flare and fist fights break out. And you had better win these fights or you'll end up on the bench! Rack up assists or even play goalie during the slap-shooting bonus rounds. The game is realistic and features colorful graphics.

Double Dribble

by Konami



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	4

Basketball comes to the NES in this simulation for one player against the computer or two players competing head-to-head. The game offers many true aspects of real basketball, such as a 24-second clock, three-point baskets, fouls and foul shots, and jump balls. If one of the players gets into the clear, you may even be treated to a full-screen sequence of a slam dunk. Length of the quarters, team location and difficulty level can be selected, and *Double Dribble* even includes halftime entertainment.

Excitebike

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Give the throttle a twist and rev up that engine. You've got to be a real pro to stay in the race as you try to pilot your speeding motorcycle over savage jumps, around tight corners and between your speeding opponents. If you wipe out, you'll never finish in first place. Keep an eye on your engine heat too; an overheated engine will cost you a lot of time. If you get tired of the built-in courses, this cartridge's programmable features allow you to design and to race on your own tracks.

Golf

by Nintendo



ACTION	1	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	N	SOUND	1

Golf your way across 18 challenging holes in this fun strategy game. One or two players can compete using tactics such as hooks, slices or straight swings by selecting from various woods or irons—even a sand wedge or putter. Various fairway views make this an interesting game, even if you're the type who can't handle all of those noisy shoot-'em-up games. Wind, sand and water traps make things a little tough, even if you're a pro. And watch out for those trees—*Fore!*

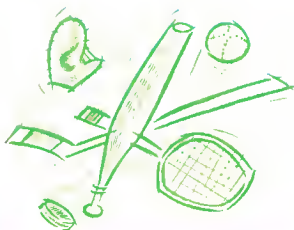
John Elway's Quarterback

by Tradewest



Denver Broncos' quarterback, John Elway, has endorsed this gridiron simulation, originally viewed in the arcades as simply *Quarterback*. Played by one player against the computer, or two players head-to-head, you coach your team from the opening kickoff through all the strategic action in a contest that is said to be more realistic due to the advice of a pro football manager during the programming stages.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Ice Hockey

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Have some slipping and sliding ice fun with this fast-action sports simulation. Options include the ability to choose your team's nationality, your team's playing traits, the game's speed and the time for each period. You may also select between a one-player game against the computer or a two-player game against a fellow hockey fan. A fast finger on your controller's 'A' button will keep you battling for the puck, but if you get too rambunctious, you'll cool your heels in the penalty box. Hear the crowd cheering?

Pro Wrestling

by Nintendo



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	1

One or two players can go at it in the ring. The best thing about this game is its comical nature—at first. After that wears off you may become somewhat bored. The crowd cheering is also a good feature. The graphics are not very smooth, and the animation and controllability are also limited. The game is also a bit difficult to get a handle on at first; it will take some practice just to get the hang of it.

Racket Attack

by Jaleco



You are a pro in the national tennis championships. Colorful graphics and detailed animation make this game exciting and life-like with characters that look more like real people than cartoons. Smash, lob, volley and slice your way to victory.

Super Team Games

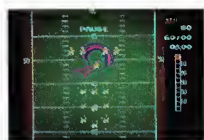
by Nintendo



Nintendo brings the summer camp competition into the house, and on your NES screen with *Super Team Games*. Using the Power Pad, you hop, skip and jump on the device to control your on-screen character through a series of contests. A skateboarding obstacle course, the log roll and a tug-of-war are among the battles that you'll find yourself competing in. Using the Power Pad will take your breath away and get your heart pumping.

10-Yard Fight

by Nintendo



In this football simulation, choose a one-player mode against the computer or take on a friend in the two-player mode. Various skill levels allow you to tailor the game to your liking, so you'll soon be running, passing and punting with the pros as you fight your way to the goal. But touchdowns won't come easily. The defense will try to tackle your quarterback and intercept your passes. Of course, after the fourth down it'll be your turn to take on the defense as your opponent fights to gain back yardage.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Track & Field II

by Konami



Better graphics and more events than the original 15 events await you. Pole vaulting, canoeing, arm wrestling, hang gliding, pistol firing, gymnastics, skeet shooting, hammer throwing, fencing and swimming are some of the contests you'll try out for. And two players can even try out simultaneously. Realistic sound effects are also part of the action starting with the crack of the gun to get things going.

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Action-packed boxing comes to the NES. You coach Little Mac from his lowly position as the third best fighter in the minor circuit through a variety of boxers towards a world championship match-up with Tyson himself. You must discover and take advantage of the weaknesses that Mac's opponents have with body punches, head blows and powerful uppercuts. Make sure you do it before Mac's strength gets too low and he's knocked out. Features password re-entry.

Tennis

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Avid athletes will take a shine to Nintendo's tennis simulation, containing five levels of difficulty. Taking on the computer by yourself or with the help of another teammate, you'll need to forehand, backhand, smash and lob your way to victory. Standard tennis rules are in place, and the computer handles all the scoring and linesman's duties. You have to get to the ball and hit it at the right moment during play.

Winter Games

by Acclaim



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	4

Acclaim brings Epyx's popular computer game to the NES, which lets you try four Winter Olympic events: Hot-dog flips on skis, bobsledding, speed skating and figure skating. After registering your initials, picking the country you want to play for and sitting through the national anthem, you can compete in the games or just practice. If you do particularly well during competition, the records will be kept for the duration of a session.

World Class Track Meet

by Nintendo



Another Power Pad-compatible cartridge, *World Class Track Meet* takes the action out of your hands and actually makes you run and jump your way to victory in a variety of track events. Hurdles, 100-yard dash and the long jump are among the races you'll participate in. Your on-screen character will duplicate your pace on the Pad, as you take on the computer, another player or a group of others in blood-pumping, heated competition.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Air Fortress

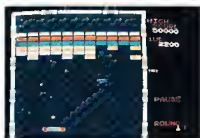
by HAL America, Inc.



Fighting your way into the 16 different fortresses is your mission here. Each fortress is a maze and getting there is not very easy. Many types of alien fighters will attack you. Your goal is to destroy a nuclear reactor core in each fortress, and then get out before everything blows up. Using the password option, you can continue a game any time, without having to repeat all of the levels.

Arkanoid

by Taito



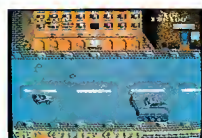
Bayou Billy

by Konami



Breakthru

by Data East



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

If you liked *Breakout*, you'll love this modernization of the classic knock-the-blocks-out theme. As you use your paddle to keep the ball in play, keep on the lookout for colored capsules that'll drop from above. If you catch them, you'll get extra powers. Various obstacles will also appear; if you hit them with the ball, you get extra points. But watch out! The obstacles can also bounce the ball at unexpected angles. *Arkanoid* comes with its own controllers, but may also be played with the standard Nintendo controllers.

Billie's girlfriend, Annabelle, has been kidnapped by the evil Gangster King of Bourbon Street and his henchmen. You are Bayou Billy, a basically good guy who is fighting mad! Now you set out shooting, fighting and driving your swamp buggy through the bayou and onto the streets of New Orleans in search of Annabelle. Wrestling alligators and other hoods will lead you to the final showdown at King's guarded estate.

ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	4

In *Breakthru*, you have to take your assault vehicle through five scrolling scenes of enemy fortresses. If, with considerable skill and a little bit of luck, you should happen to make it all the way, your last task is to recover the stolen PK430 fighter plane and bring it back over to your side. Your travels will take you past landslides, mines, armored cars, tanks and helicopters, all of these designed to halt your progress. In order to boost your abilities, you can leap up to catch power capsules that occasionally show themselves.

Burger Time

by Data East



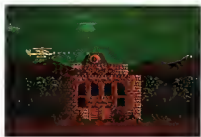
ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

In this re-creation of the arcade classic, you play the part of Chef Peter Pepper. You are trying to put together burgers by running over all the necessary ingredients and dropping them on the plate. Making this cook-out more difficult are various foes—Mr. Hot Dog, Mr. Egg and Mr. Pickle—who try to halt your progress. To get them off your tail, you can drop burger parts on them or sprinkle your limited supply of pepper to freeze them in their tracks.



Cobra Command

by Data East



Data East has brought another arcade hit to the NES with *Cobra Command*. Piloting a powerful helicopter, you'll need to search out the many hostages, using whatever weapons you have in your arsenal to protect yourself from the enemy forces. At various points in the game, you must go underground to secure additional guns, bombs and missiles to help you keep your mission going along successfully. To help you further, text hints are offered at selected points in the contest.

Commando

by Capcom



Because they've wasted their own natural resources, alien invaders have come to take ours. As the first step in the aliens' invasion, all the world's leaders have been captured, and it's up to you, as Super Joe the Commando, to find and defeat the aliens in the dark and dangerous jungle. Four levels of action stand between you and your goal. Battle your way through the jungle, the prairie, the barracks and the airport, while you fend off enemies that include Foot Soldiers, Aqua Soldiers, Trench Soldiers and Bazooka Soldiers, among others.

City Connection

by Jaleco



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

City Connection is a race and chase game that has you driving your car over the streets of the world's major cities. You must paint over all sections of the multi-level highways before moving on to a new city. But watch out for the police! They're hot on your tail, and the only way that you can avoid them is to shoot them with an oil can or jump over them. Some other obstacles include cats that pop up in the road and spikes that rise up in front of you if you should spend too much time on a single level.

Contra

by Konami



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	4

In *Contra* you go against the vicious Red Falcon, a creature from outer space who's landed in the Amazon jungle. Taken from the best group of soldiers America has to offer, you (alone or with another player cooperatively) have to battle through stage after stage, past the sensors that warn the Falcon of your progress. Each section becomes more difficult than the last. The nearer you get, the more difficult your task becomes. To help you, special weapons can be received at various points of the game, such as rapid fire and fanning bullets.

Defender II

by HAL America, Inc.



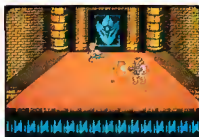
One of the most popular arcade classics comes to your Nintendo. Your mission isn't just to stay alive but to rescue the survivors stranded on the surface of a planet. Landers, mutants, phreds, baiters, swarms, dynamos, munchies, pods, space guppies and firebombers are all out to get you. Use your radar and lasers to attack the aliens while attempting to rescue the residents and get to the warp level that takes you to another area on the planet. Choose one- or two-player mode and also two skill levels.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Double Dragon

by Tradewest



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

Tradewest brings the arcade smash *Double Dragon* to the NES. Billy Lee, a karate expert, has had his girlfriend snatched off the street by the Black Warriors gang. He has to battle the Warriors through their turf, then take on the evil Shadow Boss, who turns out to be Billy's twin brother, Jimmy. You have different fighting abilities, brought out with button and controller combinations, as well as helpful weapons, to successfully grapple past the gang.

Duck Hunt

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Three games of skill that require nerves of steel and a steady hand as you try to shoot with maximum precision. (You must have the Zapper light gun.) Two of the contests put you up against speedy ducks flapping across the screen. Try not to let the snickering dog get to you if you miss! The last game is a target shoot with clay pigeons. All of these challenges are complicated by the short time you have to react, aim and fire. Miss too many targets and you're finished.

Donkey Kong Classics

by Nintendo



One of the true big hit arcade games, Nintendo's *Donkey Kong* is the original where Mario (or Luigi) must attempt to rescue his girl from Donkey Kong's clutches. Try and get to the top of the construction site dodging obstacles including barrels and great balls of fire. Also on the cartridge is Donkey Kong, Jr. where the tables are turned. You must rescue Papa, who is in Mario's prison. Donkey Kong, Jr. encounters enemy birds, swings on jungle vines and jumps on moving platforms.

Elevator Action

by TaiTo

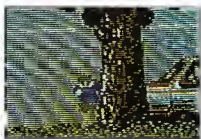


ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

In this arcade game recreation, you are Agent 17, better known as Dto. Slinking through the enemy's headquarters, you have to work your way around the building, snatching back government secrets that are hidden behind red doors. Standing in your way are a ton of trigger-happy enemy agents that lurk in the shadows and a slow system of elevators and escalators that you need to get from the top of the building to your getaway car in the basement. A gun and your smarts are your only weapons.

Freedom Force

by Sunsoft



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

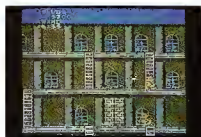
In this fast-action game using the light gun, it's up to you to stop "The Unknown Guerrillas," a group of savage terrorists who have taken over an entire airport. You must shoot your way through five different scenes in an effort to find and kill Eugene Extreme, the guerrilla leader and mastermind. The guerrillas will appear in windows, from behind pillars and cars, from just about anywhere, and you must shoot them before they get a chance to get off a shot. But watch out for innocent bystanders and hostages!

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Ghosts and Goblins

by Capcom



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Here's your chance to play Knight Arthur and rescue a princess that has been spirited away by Satan himself. At your command are such weapons as spears, torches, swords, axes and crosses, and you'll need to use them to good effect to get past the many monsters in your path. Ravens, Zombies, Red Devils, Green Monsters, Flying Knights, Forest Ghosts, Bats, Skeletons, Tower Monsters and Satan himself are just some of the creatures you'll do battle with.

Golgo 13

by Vic Tokai



Golgo 13 is a tough secret agent, who's chasing down a faceless threat armed with a bacteriological weapon. Based on a Japanese comic strip of the same name, you are Golgo 13, and your adventure takes place in all types of terrain: in the water underneath the Aegean Sea and flying through the sky in armed helicopters. No matter where you go, you'll find yourself in mortal danger.

Ghostbusters

by Activision



ACTION	1	PLAYABILITY	1
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

City full of ghosts—who ya gonna call? Ghostbusters! In this game based on the movie, you have to drive your Ectomobile around New York City in search of ghost-filled buildings. When you find one, you must trap the ghosts to earn your pay. You need a steady flow of money to buy the equipment needed to catch the nasties. Your final battle will be against Gozer, who must be defeated before the Marshmallow man reaches the top of the building. While you drive, watch your gas gauge or you'll end up pushing your car to the gas station.

Gradius

by Konami

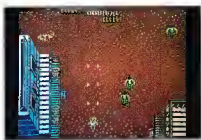


ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

Skimming through outer space in your Warp Rattler spacecraft, you encounter the Bacterion Empire. Six different levels will bring you to your final encounter. At your disposal is a cannon, but if you are good enough, you can gather energy pods along the way. These pods can equip your space ship with missiles, lasers, torpedos, a force field and up to two "ghost" ships. Enemy bases are located everywhere, and you'll even have to face erupting volcanoes, bubble-blowing Easter Island statues and the gigantic amoeba.

Gun Smoke

by Capcom



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

You play Billy Bob, a quick-draw gunfighter from the old west, as you try to rid the town of tough and ruthless bandits. As you move forward, the bandits (including such bad guys as Punk Indians, Stabber, Blast, Sniper and Dynamite) come at you from all directions—and even fire from windows. You'll have to be fast on the trigger to collect the prizes hidden in the barrels found all over town. If you acquire enough points, you'll be able to purchase extra weaponry at the General Store, so make sure you pick up all the money bags.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Hogan's Alley

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Snap decisions are necessary in this trio of quick-shooting games. (You need the Zapper light gun.) In the first two games, gangsters and innocent bystanders are targets that roll onto the screen and turn towards you in rapid succession. You have to plug the bad guys and avoid the harmless before the time is up. In the third game of trick shooting, you must keep cans in the air with your shots, in an attempt to float them over to various point platforms. In all contests, ten misses ends the game.

Hudson's Adventure Island

by Hudson Soft



On Adventure Island in the South Pacific, you have to run and skateboard around, collecting bonus fruit treasures and avoiding the meddlesome native creatures in your quest to rescue the kidnapped Princess Leilani. Watch out behind you for the evil Witch Doctor and his onslaught. This game has already sold over a million cartridges in Japan.

Jackel

by Konami



Set out to rescue your comrades from behind enemy lines. You command the Army's most advanced all-terrain Attack Jeep with guided missiles and incendiary grenades. Simple firepower isn't enough, though. You'll need skill to out maneuver the incoming attacks. For one or two players. Two opponents can play simultaneously on the screen.

Joust

by HAL America, Inc.



The famous Atari arcade game. Climb onto your Ostrich and fly into the night as you compete against other opponents. Two different levels will challenge you, as well as another player if you choose the two-player mode. You can land on the platforms, but watch out for strikes from enemies above! The graphics are colorful, the action fast.

Blow Away YOUR



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Karnov

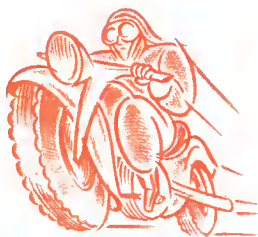
by Data East



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

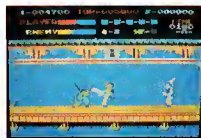
The Lost Treasure of Babylon awaits Jinborov Karnovski, known to most people as Karnov, the fireball-throwing circus strongman. All he has to do is get past Ryu, the terrifying dragon who stole the treasure to begin with. Ryu also has a band of creatures—such as Rock Man, Snake Woman and Lion Keeper—to try and fend Karnov off. Karnov can stock a variety of options, like bombs, wings and shields, to add to his strength and shooting power in battle.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Kung Fu

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	4

Thomas is a tough and experienced Kung Fu master, trained to kick, punch and jump out of all sorts of danger. In this Nintendo contest you lead Thomas into danger by taking on all the members of the nasty X gang in their castle in an effort to save the fair Sylvia. The gang consists of knife throwers, stick fighters and boomerang tossers, but Thomas faces threats from snakes, dragons and poisonous moths also. Don't forget to keep track of your energy level, which is lessened with each blow you receive.

The Legend of Kage

by Taito

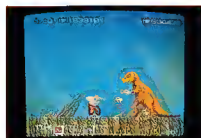


ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

This addicting arcade game is converted to the NES by Taito, a leader in coin-op games. As the ninja Kage, you must battle your way towards the castle through a forest, along a secret passageway, then up and over the wall. Once inside—if you make it that far—you have to rescue the kidnapped Princess Kiri. Standing in your path are leaping swordsmen, fire-throwing monks and bomb-tossing ninja warriors. A sword and throwing stars are your potent weapons, but various bonuses will enhance your abilities.

Kid Niki Radical Ninja

by Data East



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Kid Niki is a spike-haired punk, and you have to maneuver him through this scrolling game to rescue his girlfriend, Princess Margo, from the clutches of the Stone Wizard. Armed with a flashy sword, you'll have to jump and slash past all the nasties—among them, Masked Devil, Red Foxes and Chubbies. Each level also has a Big Boss, such as Death Breath, Horned Witch and Stone Buddha. As if that wasn't enough, you also face a time limit to complete a round.

Legendary Wings

by Capcom



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	2

It's thousands of years in the future and, donning a set of mechanical wings you have constructed, you set out to destroy a monstrous computer called DARK. This computer has ruled Earth for hundreds of years but has turned ruthless. On your way to DARK's hidden fortress, you encounter deadly robot enemies and other dangerous obstacles. Several viewpoints and detailed graphics coupled with wonderful music and animation make this a fun game.

Somewhere in the desolate and freezing wastes of the North Atlantic, between Iceland and the Kola Peninsula, a Soviet battle fleet is lurking, ready to pounce on its prey.

As NATO Task Force Commander you must deploy your fleet of submarines, ships, and aircraft to locate, engage and defeat the Kremlin's finest.

Produced by Larry Bond, noted co-author of "Red Storm Rising" and Naval Analyst, Harpoon portrays the superpower's final confrontation. Now it's up to you.

With graphics that make everything else look like finger painting, and an arsenal of weaponry that comes up to your armpits, Harpoon's non-stop action, relentless intensity and chilling responsibility will leave you gasping. It's more than a mere game—it's a current event!

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SEE IT THROUGH MY EYES.

Lifeforce

by Konami



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

The fantastic sequel to *Gradius*. Zelos, an all-engulfing, planet-eating alien is after the world *Gradius* and its neighbor *Latis*. Six very dangerous areas stand between your ship and the creature you are after. Solar flares, fire creatures and a multitude of other enemies welcome you. You and your *Latis* partner, flying his *RoadBritish* Space Destroyer, use *Ripple* lasers, *Plutonic* Missiles and *Force Fields* to attack Zelos.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Lode Runner

by Broderbund



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

As a Galactic Commando, your mission is to enter the walls of the Bungeling Empire in order to take back the gold that they have stolen. Each one of these 50 levels is a puzzle, and they are filled with Bungeling guards who will pursue you relentlessly. But you are fast, and can climb ladders, jump far and cross ropes to outwit and outrun the guards. And with your trusty *LASER* drill, you can dig through floors and even trap the guards. This game is fun, fast and challenging.

Mega Man

by Capcom

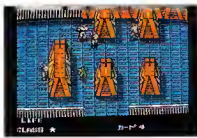


ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

In *Mega Man*, you play through six scenarios, fighting off such robot creatures as *Blader*, *Met*, *Spine*, *Flea*, *Octopus Battery* and *Screw Bomber*. If you manage to make your way through to the evil robot scientist, *Dr. Wily*, you'll have a real challenge on your hands! This is a jumping, climbing and shooting game that requires precise timing and nerves of steel. Each of the scenarios is almost totally different, with the slippery-surfaced ice world being especially entertaining as you try to keep from sliding into your enemy.

Metal Gear

by Ultra



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Playing the role of "Solid Snake," your military code name, you must search for the *Metal Gear*. This device is Colonel *Vernon CatAffy's* secret weapon, the one that he hopes to use to control the world. Your mission is to rescue as many hostages as possible, while accumulating food, weapons and other equipment to help you stay alive. Of course, there are many guards and dogs who will do whatever they can to halt your progress. The password feature lets you restart a game in progress at a later time.

Mighty Bomb Jack

by Tecmo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

King *Demon Beelzebub* has stirred up trouble by capturing *King Pamera* and his family. As *Jack*, you must find your way through *Beelzebub's* mysterious pyramid, avoiding such dastardly meanies as *C. Gee* (an ugly spider), *Heel* (a snapping skull), *Billy* (a demon bat) and others. Make sure you snap up the treasures and bombs. You'll especially want the "mighty coins"—but don't get too many, or you'll be off to the torture room to be punished for your greed. The flying and floating feel to *Jack's* movements make this game unique.

Millipede

by HAL America, Inc.



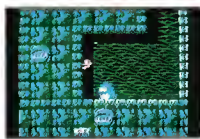
The popular sequel to Atari's *Centipede*. You are trying to rid a garden of pests that buzz, crawl, squirm, wiggle and creep. Turn them into mushrooms before they get to you and eat you up. Twelve different levels of attack and two skill levels make this a tough game for one or two players. The game gets faster and faster as you go!



Buyer's 1989 Guide

Ninja Taro

by American Sammy Corp.



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Choose to begin in one of three scenarios, and then be prepared to move forward against heavy opposition. You'll be attacked by all types of strange creatures, not the least of which are knife-throwing skeletons. Climb to the top of pyramids, towers and icy stairways—but make sure you grab the life-giving capsules and the gems that'll award you with secret weapons. The fire wheel can be especially effective against your enemies!

Pinball

by Nintendo

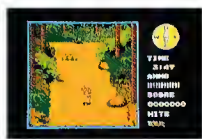


ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	1

This game simulates a pinball game on your television. The game is divided between a top and bottom, where you launch your ball onto the top screen and play it out using a first set of flippers. If you lose the ball, it then moves into the lower screen with its own set of flippers. A neat bonus round is played by moving a Mario character back and forth to deflect the ball. Bumpers, bonus nodes and sound effects are all there!

Platoon

by Sunsoft



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	1
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

In this electronic take-off of the popular movie, you must battle through the four stages of your mission: Jungle and Village, The Tunnels, The Bunker and 3-0 Jungle. You'll have to be fast on the trigger of your M-16 rifle and be ready to toss grenades at any movement. The enemy can come from anywhere—from underground, from the trees, from underwater. If you search hard enough, you'll find maps, medical supplies and other necessary items, but mapping the mazes will be no easy feat.

Predator

by Activision



Activision, a veteran of many popular video-game creations over the years, has brought us an adaptation of the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, *Predator*. In the game you follow the combat-filled premise of the film, battling against a nearly invisible alien attacker to the death.

Rad Racer

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	2

Fire up your engine in this exciting race against the clock. Eight challenging courses await you including Athens, San Francisco, Los Angeles at night and the Rocky Mountains. You get to drive everything from a VW Beetle to a Ferrari, even a F-1 racer. Hills, other cars and tight turns make the driving realistic and challenging. Brakes, Turbocharger and realistic graphics add to the realism and excitement. You can even select the 3-D option (3-D glasses included) to really get into the driver's seat.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Rambo

by Acclaim



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	1
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	1

Colonel Trautman has sent you, John Rambo, on a military mission. You must carve your way deep into the Vietnam jungle to take pictures of a prisoner-of-war camp, where some of your fellow soldiers are being jailed. Of course, being the adventurous and sly Rambo, you'll want to try to rescue them also. This jungle is filled with panthers, cobras and other natural foes aside from the bad guys you must face, but gathering weapons in your trek will help you out.

Rampage

by Data East



Based on the arcade game of the same name, Data East brings *Rampage* to the NES. You, alone or in cooperation with another player, control George the Ape and Lizzy the Lizard as they try to trash a city's buildings by stomping and beating on them. During this adventure, you'll need to keep an eye on your damage level, which is diminished by not eating enough, as well as from the military and police, who do their best to bomb and shoot you out of town.

Raid on Bungeling Bay

by Broderbund



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	1

You look down on the helicopter you are flying, and somewhere below that are the six factories of the Bungeling Empire. The factories are heavily protected by tanks, guns, radar sights, enemy fighters and gun boats. Even though you can carry many bombs, you may still need to find your aircraft carrier and get more to blow up a factory. Some take many, many bombs. Find the enemy airport, and you can destroy some planes before they even take off. And don't stray too far from your carrier either. The enemy may attack and try to sink it.

R.C. Pro-Am

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

You share over 30 racetracks with three other "radio control" cars. These twisty roads contain, oil, water and other hazards, as well as special prizes which give your car more speed, smoke screens and even guns. The turbo feature gives you bursts of speed to outrun the other guys. A special view screen shows the position of the other cars, as you try and beat them to the finish line.

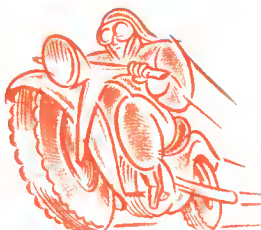
Renegade

by Taito



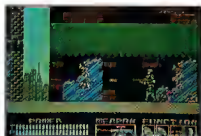
ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

You play the Renegade in this arcade game brought to life on the NES. You find yourself in battle against a slew of adversaries—brutal thugs, vicious motorcyclists and kung-fu ladies—in various locales. Only your kicks, throws and punches can save you, but bonuses can be earned (with the assistance of the manual) to help you with special powers, such as super power, restoring your energy level or bringing out a second Renegade at the same time.



Robocop

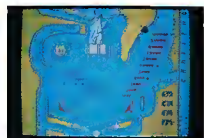
by Data East



The adventures of Robocop are put in your control in this Data East conversion of the popular action movie. Scrolling through nine levels of adventurous play and following closely along with the story line of the movie, you take Robocop onto the streets of Detroit to kick, punch and shoot criminals, all the while attempting to save the kidnap victims from harm.

Roller Ball

by HAL America, Inc.



Four different screens that scroll up and down will challenge even the best video pinball player. Use your controller buttons to move the "flippers" on each side of the screen. Another version lets you and another player compete in pinball hockey, where you try and get the ball through the goal using just flippers.

Section-Z

by Capcom

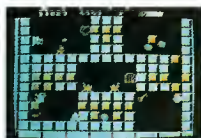


ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

In *Section-Z*, you don your high-tech, battle-ready spacesuit and join Captain Commando on a mission to bring down the Space Soldiers of Balangool and ultimately destroy the L-Brain Master Control. As you attempt to penetrate the Space Soldiers' headquarters, you are confronted with various types of enemies that must be defeated in order to get through to your final goal. Quick reflexes on the fire button are required as the constantly moving background forces you forward, giving you no time for mistakes.

Solomon's Key

by Tecmo



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

In this game of magic and mayhem, you get to guide Dana, the wizard of Lyrac, through 50 different puzzle rooms in order to release the fairy that's trapped in each one. Use your magic wand to create or destroy stone blocks with which you can build your own stairways or walls. You'll have to use your wits to figure out just the right moves to complete each room. Collect crystals, scrolls, fireballs and medicines—but watch out for the Demonsheads, goblins and dragons that are determined to stop you.

Spelunker

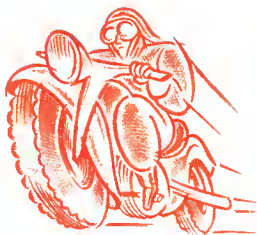
by Broderbund



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

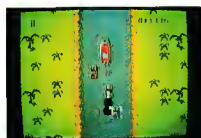
Explore a complex and dangerous labyrinth of caves in search of fabulous treasure. As you move through the caverns, you must jump, climb and fight your way through six increasingly difficult levels, each filled with lava pits, bats, steam volcanos and the ghosts of past spelunkers who didn't make the grade. If you bump into any of these obstacles, your quest will be over. Within the caverns are many ropes, ladders, elevators and other items that will help you move about, but you must be very careful not to fall.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Spy Hunter

by Sunsoft

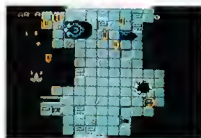


ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

In this arcade conversion you get to utilize smoke screens, oil slicks, torpedoes, machine guns and other tools of the spy trade to battle and destroy enemy agents while at the same time trying to keep your speeding car on the road. Don't shoot or hit the innocent bystanders, though, or you'll lose points. And if you don't keep the speed of your car under control, you'll end your mission in flaming ruin. Spy Hunter will also let you try your hand at piloting a speedboat.

Starforce

by Tecmo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	4

You control the Final Star, a small space fighter whose mission is to attack the mysterious planet Gordess, which is divided into 24 different areas. You start with a small Star Beam Gun, but add to your ship's weapons by picking up objects along the way. The game's view is similar to Xevious, where you are looking downward on your ship. The terrain is a highly detailed hi-tech surface over which the enemy ships pass. You can also destroy ground-based targets for extra points.

Super Mario Brothers

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

This is one game that every Nintendo owner should have. Mario must rescue the beautiful princess hidden somewhere in the Mushroom Kingdom. It's no wonder that this game is such a popular one with its colorful screens, great music and sound effects, and many secret tricks. Flying carpets, hidden beanstalks, underground caverns with gold coins and secret bricks and mushrooms are some of the features that make this game a lot tougher than it looks.

Super Mario Bros. 2

by Nintendo



Hot on the heels of their previous success in *Super Mario Bros.*, Mario and Luigi have been recruited to return to your NES in another action-packed chase. Racing around new territory, you'll control your old pals through new adventures against new adversaries, with new weapons at their call. Items can be pulled out of the ground, such as turnips and potions, that are used to your advantage.

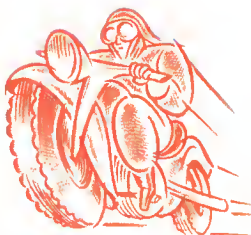
Super Pitfall

by Activision



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Video-game players from the early '80s will fondly remember this ground-breaking adventure, which is now brought to the NES in higher quality form. You play Pitfall Harry, who is in search of the Raj Diamond as well as on a mission to save his niece Rhonda and Quickclaw the Lion. On his journey through over 270 screens, he faces a deadly pack of enemies: snakes, spiders, scorpions, frogs and more. He must also grab gold bars for points, helpful clues and various hidden bonuses to keep his quest going.



Buyer's 1989 Guide

Tetris

by Tengen



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Russia brings us this intense thinking game that is billed as "the Rubik's Cube of video games." Different shapes drop from the top of the screen, and your job is to rotate and fit them together to complete rows, leaving as little blank space as possible. Each completed row disappears from the screen (with an increase in your score), leaving you more room to continue with the next pieces. It starts off easily enough, but the pace picks up until the pile-up hits the top of the display, ending the game.

The 3-D Battles of Worldrunner

by Acclaim



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	2

Grax, the evil alien Serpentbeast, is menacing Solar System #517. Only you can fight your way past eight worlds of danger inhabited by Grax's band of meanies—Robot Heads, White Willies and Hand Man, among others—to save the galaxy. Along your way, you must gather weapons, such as Laser Missiles and Atomic Power, by running into the columns that dot the landscape. The game comes with 3-D glasses so you can play with extra dimension added, although it can also be played normally.

Tiger-Heli

by Acclaim



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

A top secret helicopter is at your control. Swoop in over enemy tanks, ships, gun turrets and battleships destroying them with your missiles and bombs. Earn bonus points and you can acquire extra helicopters, some that even shoot sideways. This is one game that will always keep you moving as you fly over towns, bodies of water and various terrain. Other targets include fuel sites, aircraft, gun boats and buildings.

Top Gun

by Konami



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Looking out the windshield of your F-14 Fighter, you are catapulted from the aircraft-carrier deck to face enemy fighters, ships, missile-launching submarines, low-flying attack helicopters and ground-based missiles and tanks. You must complete several missions to earn your *Top Gun* trophy. First you get a practice run, then you must destroy an enemy carrier. Then you go against a huge underground missile silo, and finally, a space-shuttle base. You must land on the carrier between missions, and even refuel in midair.

Trojan

by Capcom



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

In this sword-swinging, punching-and-kicking adventure, you must defeat the armies of an evil king in order to release his captives. Underground dungeons and secret rooms abound in each of the seven levels. Your enemy will be difficult to defeat, requiring a lot of cunning and speed if you're to meet with success. Hidden bonus characters such as high-jumping boots, strength-restoring hearts and speed-up symbols assist you against such ruthless enemies as The Slasher, The Hatchet Brothers, Iron Arms and The Killer Piranha.

Vegas Dream

by HAL America, Inc.



Black Jack, Roulette, Slot Machine and Keno are all here. Up to four players can experience a Vegas casino in two different simulations. You begin with \$700 which you may bet as you wish. Watch out for the pickpockets and other hazards. You win when you "earn" one million dollars—and you even get a prize. If you lose, well . . .

Wizards & Warriors

by Acclaim



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

Malkil, Merlin's teacher, is a powerful wizard who has turned bad. As Kuros, the brave knight, you have to pass through the kingdom called Elrond and fight off all of the wretched beasts under the wizard's spell. If you manage to make it through successfully, you need to search out Malkil and release the princess he has taken as hostage. During your journey, you have to build up your strength by acquiring gems, keys (to open chests and doors) and special weapons which will aid you in your search.

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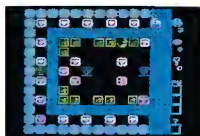
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Adventures of Lolo

by HAL America, Inc

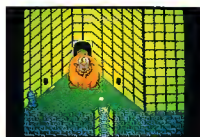


You must solve the 10 by 12 matrix maze to save the Princess Lala. Each room of the matrix is a mind-challenging puzzle. You must figure out how to get through the room by moving objects, avoiding enemies and solving the puzzle, among other tasks. Along the way you must pick up all the keys you need and meet up with four wizards before you can save Lala. The game features a password, so that you may resume a game at any time from the point you left off.



Deadly Towers

by Broderbund



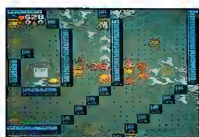
ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

In this magic-filled adventure game, you (playing Prince Meyer) must defeat Rubas, King of the Devils and restore peace to the land. To do this you must first locate and destroy the seven bell towers. You must have good mapping skills to keep track of the hundreds of rooms, secret dungeons, pathways and parallel worlds that make up the immense castle, and a clever attack strategy is the only way to avoid defeat. The three-dimensional graphics add further to the game's realism and challenge, allowing movement in any of eight directions.

Buyer's 1989 Guide

Gauntlet

by Tengen



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	2

Based on the popular arcade machine, this game forces you (or, cooperatively, with another player) into the depths of the Gauntlet to retrieve Rendar's treasures and, most importantly, the Sacred Orb. You'll go head-to-head against the worst warriors and obstacles that Morak the Evil One can toss at you. During the journey you'll need to gather as many potions, keys, treasures and platters of food to keep yourself successful. You have the choice of four different characters each with varied strengths and weaknesses. Features password re-entry.

Blastar Master

by Sunsoft



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	4

You have accidentally fallen into a deep and seemingly inescapable pit. At the bottom you find MetalAttacker, a small but extremely powerful vehicle. You climb into the MetalAttacker and set out to make your escape. But in order to do it, you need to conquer the hundreds of fierce radioactive mutants that are living underground. As you defeat the enemies you can gather more gunpower, flying capability, even submarine options and wall-climbing abilities. This game features great playability, music and action.

Kid Icarus

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

As the young angel Pit, you must travel through Angel Land in order to conquer Medusa and its army. As you make your way towards the Palace in the Sky, you'll have to make the grueling journey through the Underworld, Overworld and Skyworld. The music, graphics and playability in this game are among the best—but be warned—this is one of the toughest games you will ever play. The password feature allows you to stop and continue a game at a later time. If you liked Super Mario Brothers or Metroid, this game is for you.

The Legend of Zelda

by Nintendo



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SCORE	2

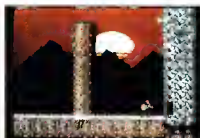
One of the most popular games for the Nintendo. You take on the role of Link. As you wander throughout the mythical kingdom of Hyrule, you must acquire the powerful Triforce, seek out and destroy the evil Ganon, then rescue the enchanting Princess Zelda. The game cartridge is covered in an attractive shiny gold and has a built-in battery that allows you to stop a game and continue at your convenience at a later date. Many treasures, dungeons and enemies await you! This is a game that requires skill and cunning at every step.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Rygar

by Tecmo



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SCORE	2

Guide the hero Rygar on his quest to return peace to the land of Argool which has been suffering at the hands of the troops of the evil King Ligar. Leap, climb and fight your way through the five territories of Argool. Seek out the legendary gods and take heed of their advice. Even as you make your way through the swarming enemy creatures, you must be on the lookout for such helpful items as grappling hooks, wind pulleys and crossbows. The "Door to Peace" has been taken away, and now only you can restore it.

Simon's Quest

by Konami



Even though Count Dracula was destroyed some time ago, his presence still exists to haunt you. To rid the curse you must find and destroy the five missing body parts. This quest leads you to the Count's old castle in Transylvania where you encounter mazes of graveyards, mansions and eerie forests filled with werewolves, zombies and demons. Look for clues from villagers as well as magic weapons. You'll need 'em.

Metroid

by Nintendo



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SCORE	4

Samus Aran is your name. Space pirates have gotten hold of a dangerous life-form called Metroid, which they are growing inside the world Zebes. As Samus, your mission is to destroy the Mother Brain which is nurturing Metroid. To do this you must explore the mysterious maze of rooms filled with space creatures, lava seas and other obstacles. Along the way Samus can collect a long range gun, an ice ray, a powerful wave gun, high-jumping boots, missiles and more. The graphics, music and action won't disappoint.

Xenophobe

by Sunsoft



Your space station has been infested with alien life-forms, the Xenos. You must destroy as many Xenos as possible before your station self-destructs. If you exterminate enough Xenos in time, your space station will become safe, and you get a bonus. If not, the station will be declared overrun and no bonus is given. There are eight space stations including a Moon City, Star Port and Mother Ship. Each one has eight rooms per floor in this fast-paced shoot-'em-up.

Zelda II—The Adventure Of Link

by Nintendo



Link is grown up now and traveling the countryside searching for allies to assist him in defeating Gannon. Visit different town meetings and "talk" to townspeople looking for clues, hints and advice. You'll traverse desert, forest, mountains, swamp lands and six secret areas in your quest. This game, which includes a battery that "remembers" where you left off, will keep you busy with secret tricks, special weapons and colorful graphics.

Dance Aerobics

by Nintendo



Utilizing the new Power Pad, Nintendo has created a tireless exercise teacher that you can use any time you wish. Geared for the younger set, you can run through 12 levels of exercise, with any of the 64 different, preprogrammed routines. By following the lead of the video instructor, then stepping on the matching numbered spots on the Pad, you can stay in shape and have fun at the same time.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Sesame Street 123...

by Hi-Tech



Characters from the Sesame Street TV show, such as Big Bird, Grover and Cookie Monster, help young kids learn their basic math skills in a pair of games bundled into one cartridge. "Astro-Grover" entertains while it educates you about the counting process. Through music and graphics, "Pals Around Town" helps you understand objects, jobs and how they all interact in society.

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Action

Bad Dudes

by Data East

Data East brings the recent coin-op game, *Bad Dudes*, to the NES. In the game, President Ronnie has been abducted by bad guys. You need to take on a whole force of villains to rescue him, such as tough-hitting ninjas, deadly dogs and flame-spitting strongmen. To make it even more difficult, many are carrying deadly weapons, but if you are lucky enough you'll be able to extract some of these for your own benefit.

Action

Bump 'n' Jump

by Vic Tokai

In this remake of the popular arcade classic, Dark Jackal and his gang of off-road terrorists have kidnapped your girlfriend, Bunny. Your only hope is to put the steering wheel in hand and drive, drive, drive. But your trek soon turns into a terrifying demolition derby. Only you, Buggy (your faithful vehicle) and some slick cruising, can get your lady back...maybe.

Action

California Games

by Milton Bradley

First seen on personal computers everywhere and originally produced by Epyx, Milton Bradley has brought *California Games* to the NES. In it you compete in a variety of radical events that will make you feel the sunshine on your controller: feektop-skimming skateboarding, surfing on perfect waves, freestyle footbagging or hacky sack, BMX bike tricks, freewheeling rollerskate slaloms and wind-blown Frisbee tossing.

Buyer's 1989 Guide

Action

Heavy Barrel

by Data East

Terrorists are getting their hands on a cache of deadly nuclear weapons. Your mission in Data East's *Heavy Barrel* is to break into a military fortress and gather the pieces of the "ultimate weapon," the Heavy Barrel gun, to prevent these baddies from launching an attack. To reach that goal, you'll need to collect all the keys you come across to open the many storage lockers that may contain the needed parts.

Action

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom

by Mindscape

Straight from the arcade screen and into your NES, comes the adventurous Indiana Jones. Indy has to find the secret location where the Mayapore children are held captive and also gather up the sacred Sankara Stones. Of course, the journey out of the Temple of Doom is marked by constant conflicts with snakes, bats and brawls with a pack of thugs led by the terrible Mola Ram.

Action

Milon's Secret Castle

by Hudson Soft

In another popular game brought over from Japan, you must find your way through this crazy castle filled with hidden treasures, intriguing puzzles and the normal troop of dangerous characters trying to stop you. You need to investigate every nook and cranny to get the strength to survive long enough to track down the captured Queen Eliza.



Action

Marble Madness

by Milton Bradley

Based on the exciting arcade game of the same name, *Marble Madness* comes to the NES from the big-time board-game manufacturer, Milton Bradley. In this contest, you have to control the movement of a sphere around a labyrinth packed with various obstacles. Aside from the twisting, turning path, you have to guide the ball through tunnels, rippling sections of track and gates, as well as being endangered by acid puddles, attacking marbles, hungry worms and more.

Educational

Sesame Street ABC...

by Hi-Tech

With the help of Muppets from the Sesame Street show, this pair of games in one cartridge assists children in learning their alphabetic skills. "Letter-Go-Round" has Big Bird, Grover and Barkley helping you group letters together to create simple word groups. "Grover's Animal Adventures" lets you place animals in a variety of colorful scenes to boost the imagination.

Action

World Games

by Milton Bradley

Milton Bradley has converted Epyx's *World Games* for play on the NES. This game, originally seen on computer screens, is actually a series of Olympic-style events from around the globe. You compete in Acapulco cliff-diving, Japanese Sumo wrestling, Scottish caber tossing, barrel jumping from Germany, weight lifting from Russia, Canadian log-rolling and, last but not least, American bull-riding.

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and dungeons of Elrond lies the key to your quest. The powers of levitation, the cloak of darkness, and the mysterious potions only Kuros can drink will be revealed to you.

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But the wizard is watching you, warrior. And this tale has just begun.



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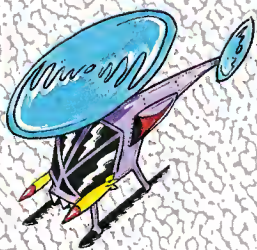
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Buyer's
1989
Guide



Sega



Great Basketball

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

In this sports simulation for one or two players, you get to choose the nationality of your team before starting play. The team member who's standing under the arrow or the one who has the ball is the one you'll control as you maneuver toward your basket. Dribble the ball down the court or pass it to another team member—or if you're in the clear, take a shot. Don't run into your opponents, though, or they'll be awarded a foul shot. The referee calls the plays with a digitized voice.

Great Volleyball

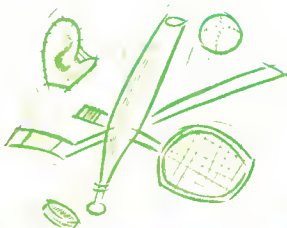
by Sega



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

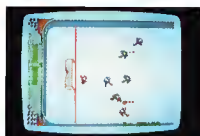
Set your team's skills and play under one of eight national flags in this one- or two-player volleyball simulation. Your control pad will allow you to move your players, as well as serve, receive, spike, set and dink the ball. Precision timing and concentration are the keys, as you try to take advantage of your opponent's weak points. You'll need a lot of skill to win, so if you need to brush up on some of those skills, you'd better take advantage of the available practice mode.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Great Ice Hockey

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

In this sports simulation requiring the Sega Sports Pad, you get to select your level of play, the nationality of the teams and the length of each period. Colored arrows on the screen mark which players you are able to move, as well as which ones are open to receive a pass. Using the Power Pad's ball controller, you maneuver your players across the ice in effort to score against your opponent.

Sports Pad Football

by Sega



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Run, kick, pass, block and punt your way to victory in this sports simulation requiring the Sega Sports Pad. When playing the offense, you must select your formation and pattern of play from the nine on-screen choices; then it's down to the scrimmage line where you'll try to press forward and gain some yardage. When on the defense, the player under your control is marked by a colored arrow. When on the offense, you control the player with the ball. But in either case, the faster you move your ball controller, the faster your player will run.

Aztec Adventure

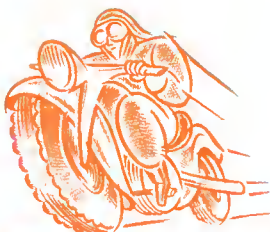
by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

As Nino, it's up to you to search out a legendary Aztec paradise. But to get there you must make your way through a dangerous labyrinth populated by terrifying demons and monsters. Some of the occupants of the labyrinth will become your ally if you pay them enough, but that won't guarantee your success. You must keep an eye peeled for such special items as Fireballs, Water Boots, Dynamite and Tornadoes—they may give you just the edge you need to destroy the boss demon of each of the ten levels.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Enduro Racer

by Sega



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Pilot your speeding motorcycle through five different scenes, each containing many types of treacherous obstacles, including jumps, rocks, trees, dirt and, of course, other racers. The controls allow you to accelerate, brake, steer and perform a wheelie; but you'll have to practice these maneuvers to become proficient enough to make good time. And speaking of time, you have to complete each race within a certain period. If you don't make it, you'll be disqualified and out of the race.

F-16 Fighting Falcon

by Sega



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Fly your F-16 Fighting Falcon into battle against the enemy's MIG-25 Foxbats. At your command is a full array of instruments to help you in your flight, including an air-speed indicator, a compass, an altimeter, a radar screen and others. Control your plane manually as you try to bring down the MIGs with your missiles and your 20mm machine gun—or switch over to autopilot so you can really concentrate on the fight. *F-16 Fighting Falcon* is as much a flight simulator as a game.

Fantasy Zone II

by Sega

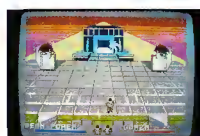


ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Opa-Dpa is back, defending his city from the Blackhearts. To complete the game, you must frantically shoot through eight rounds, gathering up money and looking for the hidden warp gates as you go. Defeating the Blackhearts will be no simple matter. You must first find their weak spot, and then exploit it to the maximum of your abilities. You'll be attacked by over 30 different types of "cruel characters," including Twister, Bigmouth, Slug, Snakebite and Knucklejaw.

Ghostbusters

by Sega

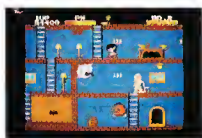


ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

You thrilled to and laughed at their exploits on the silver screen, now it's your turn to join the infamous Ghostbusters on their quest to free the city of supernatural forces. Select the car that best suits your strategy and load it up with equipment; then it's on to the city map where you must drive around scooping up ghosts with your Ghost Vacuum and trapping others with your Ghost Traps. Look out! Here comes the Marshmallow man. If he tromps on a building, you'll have to pay the damages!

Ghost House

by Sega



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

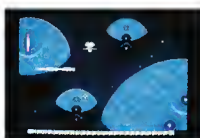
The priceless family jewels are yours—if you can find them. Unfortunately, they're somewhere inside Count Dracula's mansion, and that place is crawling with Mummies, Bats, Fire Blowers and Death himself. As you roam the hallways trying to find your way around, you'll have to avoid the creatures, as well as hidden traps, flying knives, flying arrows, spider webs, pits and fires. And all you have to defend yourself with are your fists and your knife!

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Global Defense

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

The earth is under attack! From deep space come ten waves of deadly satellites and missiles. Your laser cannon is in orbit around the earth, right in the path of the oncoming enemy. Don't get hit and don't let any of the enemy forces past you. Keep moving your laser cannon out of danger, while at the same time positioning the "firing cursor" that marks your target. Every enemy that gets by you in the offensive half of the game will be back to haunt you in the defensive half.

Hang On and Safari Hunt

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

This exciting "combo cartridge" is the one that comes with the Sega Master System. In *Hang On* you must race your motorcycle against the other computer-controlled contestants. You can accelerate, brake, steer and even switch gears. In *Safari Hunt* you'll get a chance to plug in your Light Phaser light gun and try to get the best of the many leaping, flying and running animals. If you hit them, they'll run away with Band-aids on!

Kenseiden

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

It's 16th Century Japan, when swordsmanship was considered to be one of the most necessary of skills. You'll be able to put your swordsmanship to the test in this nonstop battle as you pit yourself against a host of creatures, including monkeys, bats, armadillos, spiders, deadly skeletons and others.

Kung Fu Kid

by Sega



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

The evil Madanda has killed your Kung Fu Master, and now you're out to seek retribution. Before you can exact your revenge, though, you must make your way to the Lion's Castle where Madanda resides. As you kick and jump your way forward, you'll have to battle not only your enemies but also a pressing time limit. Make sure you don't overlook the talismans that'll give you extra points and powers, as well as the jars that ward off fire balls and the sweet buns that restore your life force.

Marksman and Trap Shooting

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	4

Come on down to the firing range for some reflex-straining action as you try to hit the bull's-eye on the moving, spinning, bobbing and weaving targets. Your ammunition is unlimited, so don't be afraid to blast away—but remember that every shot has an effect on your score. If you prefer some outside action, take a trip to the trap-shooting range. Here you'll get to try your luck at clay pigeons as they are released over varying scenery. This cartridge requires the Light Phaser light gun.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



My Hero

by Sega

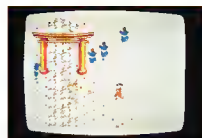


ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Your girlfriend, Remy, has been captured by a gang of street punks. You'll need all your martial arts skills to kick and punch the hoodlums as they come after you, throwing knives and broken bottles. You'll also have to watch out for pigs, bombs, ferocious dogs, spiked wheels, steel balls, radio-controlled cars and other deadly obstacles. And did we mention the punks that hang out of windows and drop bottles on your head?

The Ninja

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

The evil Gyokuro now rules Ohkami, and his ninjas prowl the countryside making life miserable for the citizens. As the hero Kazamaru, you must overthrow Gyokuro and bring peace back to Ohkami. You'll need fast reflexes, though, if you plan to be successful against the likes of the Fire-blowing Ninja, the Slashing Ninja, the Darting Ninja, the Ninja Wolves and others. Luckily, the many secret scrolls hidden throughout the 13 locations will give you extra powers—and you'll need all the help you can get!

Penguin Land

by Sega



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Your task: Maneuver three lost penguin eggs to safety. As Overbite, you must peck away ice blocks, creating a safe path for the egg as it drops toward its goal. Meanwhile, Gangow the polar bear is all set to clobber you and smash the egg, and the condor, Cameel, is happy to fly by and drop a brick on the egg if you should stay in one position too long. This game features an editor that lets you create your own screens and a battery-backup system that allows you to save your work for later play.

Quartet

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

Aliens have attacked Colony No. Nine and stolen Queen Cynthia's casket. Worse, unless you do something about it, they're planning on destroying the entire colony. In the one-player game you must go against the aliens alone, but in the two-player cooperative mode, you can have a friend aid you in your battle. There are lots of dangers; but helpful items such as Point-balls, Jet Engines, Stoppers, Bombs and Missiles will help you toward victory.

Rambo First Blood Part II

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Hollywood comes to Sega in this arcade war game based on the famous Rambo character. You must penetrate the enemy territory in an attempt to reach the concentration camps and release the captives. Your weapons include an M-16 and five Arrow Bombs. But even that well equipped, you'll have to fight savagely to survive because the enemy will be firing back, not only with rifles, but with flame-throwers and tanks too! The two-player mode allows you to take on the six different terrains with a friend as a partner.

Teddy Boy

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

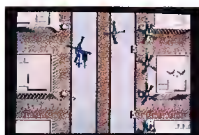
Seven different monsters are up against Teddy Boy in this sizzling maze shoot-'em-up. As you guide Teddy Boy along with his Microgun, you'll run into Blue Masked Monsters, Dharman, Oshishi, Imorin and others. Unfortunately, shooting the monsters doesn't get rid of them; it only turns them into Eyeball Bugs that eat away at your timer. To get rid of them completely, you'll have to make contact—and that can be a difficult proposition if they bounce too far away.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Thunder Blade

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Fly your heavily armed helicopter over the tops of buildings and down the city streets in this simulated 3-D action game based on the arcade hit. Enemy tanks are on a constant vigil, prepared to shoot you down on sight, and the enemy helicopters will attack both singly and in formation, forcing you to maneuver your helicopter out of the way, while frantically firing your guns.

Shooting Gallery

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

This exciting game requiring the Light Phaser light gun has you blasting your way through four different shooting gallery setups. First you must hit birds as they fly over mountaintops. After that, you graduate to an aerial balloon-popping contest, a maze that has balls rolling through a series of tubes, and "TV Terror" where you try to shoot spaceships and TVs—but you can only hit them when their shields are down!

Wonder Boy

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

Your girlfriend, Tanya, has been kidnapped and hidden. It's up to you as Wonder Boy to find and rescue her; but in order to do so, you're going to have to search through forests, mountains, oceans, glaciers, caves and other exotic locales. You'll start out on foot and weaponless, but if you're lucky, you'll soon be speeding away on a skateboard and throwing axes at all your foes which include cobras, speckled eggs, flaming skeletons, coal kids and many other deadly beings.

Zaxxon-3D

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	2

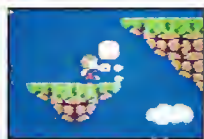
The Vargon battle fortresses are reaching their way toward earth. It's up to you to guide your ship, Zaxxon, through the fortresses and destroy the enemy. But you must keep an eye on your fuel; if you don't blast enough fuel dumps, you'll crash. Your mission: Destroy as many Death Fighters, Fuel Tanks, Cannon Batteries and Tanks as you can as you fight your way to the enemy mother ship. On your way pick up various power pills to increase your resources. This game requires the Sega 3-D glasses for a stunning 3-D effect.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Alex Kidd in Miracle World

by Sega



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Journey with Alex Kidd through the eleven locations of the Miracle World, including Mt. Eternal, the Village of Namui, the Radactian Castle and others. Millions of stone blocks and boxes are ready for smashing, some containing valuable treasures. Make sure you gather up all the bags of gold; you'll need the cash to buy from the shop such helpful items such as Teleport Powder and the Cane of Flight. Can you resolve the mystery of the map and the Sun Stone medallion? The people of Radactian City hope so!

Lord of the Sword

by Sega



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

You must be an absolute master of both sword and bow to battle your way through the many creatures standing between you and your kingdom. You fight demons, bats, flying fish, man-size lizards, gigantic eyes and other monsters as you vie for victory. It's a tough assignment, and you won't go unscathed, but if your strength gets too low, you can stop at the inn for a rest.

Monopoly

by Sega



ACTION	1	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	2	SOUND	2

I doubt there's anyone on the planet who hasn't at least heard of Milton Bradley's famous game of finance, *Monopoly*. In fact, most everyone in the civilized world has dedicated hundreds of hours of play to this all-time classic. The main problem with a board game like *Monopoly* is keeping all the pieces together. But thanks to Sega, you'll never again have to ransack your house looking for the deed for Boardwalk.

Shanghai

by Sega



ACTION	1	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	2

For centuries, people have been playing Mah Jongg, an oriental game of strategy. Now Mah Jongg comes to the Sega in the form of *Shanghai*. Match up the illustrated tiles to remove them from the board. If you're lucky and plan your moves well, you just might be able to clear every tile from the board and win. You can choose to accompany your game from one of three different musical selections, or you can turn off the music completely.

After Burner



Yet another Sega arcade translation, *After Burner* has you on a search for the enemy's secret plans. The skies will be filled with fire as you dogfight your way to victory. The outcome of the war is all up to you.

Buyer's 1989 Guide

Alien Syndrome



Alien spaceships have landed and captured your friends in this Sega version of the arcade original. Unfortunately, the ships are about to explode. If you don't get them out in time, your friends are destined to become cosmic dust.

Fantasy Zone



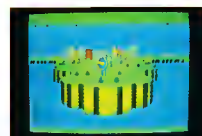
In his original adventure, Opa-Opa enters the Fantasy Zone to battle the evil Menons. Can you help Opa-Opa succeed and save the Fantasy Zone from destruction? You'll need to collect all the money you can on your quest, so keep your eyes peeled.

Fantasy Zone: The Maze



This time around Opa-Opa must make his way through a series of dangerous Menon mazes. Besides the high-quality graphics, this game features not only standard one-player play, but also a two-player cooperative mode as well.

Missile Defense 3-D



Based on the original video hit, *Missile Defense 3-D* offers a whole new dimension (literally) to this popular shoot-'em-up. Four different locations are under the enemy's attack, and you have to shoot down the missiles before they reach the cities below. You'll need the SegaScope 3-D glasses for this one.

Outrun



Hop into your jazzy red sportscar and race against the clock in this arcade translation. In this wild road-rally contest, your vehicle can attain simulated speeds of over 200 mph, so you're going to have to keep a tight hand on the wheel and a steady foot on the brakes.

Poseiden Wars 3-D



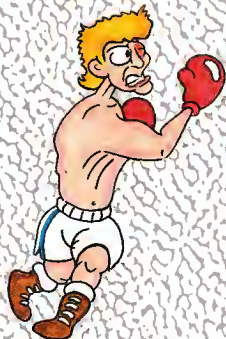
It's off to submarine adventure in this 3-D battle game. Prowl the ocean in search of enemy ships, but don't let them find you first. Use your periscope to identify and target the enemy, then launch your torpedoes to finish him off. This game requires the SegaScope 3-D glasses.

Space Harrier 3-D



The arcade hit *Space Harrier* returns, revamped with 3-D graphics and lots of new battle screens for Space Harrier fans to take on. This game requires the SegaScope 3-D glasses.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Atari

Fight Night

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SDUND	3

Fight Night is a boxing game in which you challenge up to five different, computer-controlled boxers, each one with its own separate cartoon-like personality. But this isn't just another arcade boxing game; it also allows you to construct your own boxing characters (computer or human-controlled) and save them to disk with an XE disk drive. You then test out your newly created boxers by putting them through training and sparring. Finally, you and a friend can line up all of your boxers for fighting in the main tournament.

Hardball!

by Atari



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SDUND	2

This is a baseball game where you not only get to bat, pitch, and play all fields of the game but also manage aspects of your team as well. You play *Hardball!* mostly on the pitcher/batter screen, which shows the scene from behind the pitcher. Different pitches and batting positions are easily chosen from on-screen menus. Right and left sides of the game field, with the outfield and infield, appear whenever the ball is in play. Designated hitters may be chosen, and other players can be exchanged or substituted.

One on One

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	N	SDUND	2

You and a friend (or the computer) play basketball one on one, each assuming the role of NBA stars Julius Erving or Larry Bird. You may select from different game variations in scoring, game difficulty and other rules. The computer even programs the strengths and weaknesses of the real-life Bird and Erving into your player as you play. When your player becomes too weak from exhaustion, you must call "timeout" to allow him to rest for a moment. Other nice touches in *One on One* include shattering backboards and instant replays.

Archon

by Atari



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

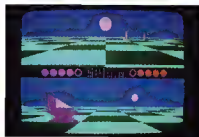
In Archon unicorns, knights, and other mystical beings make up the "light" side, while hideous monsters such as trolls and dragons comprise the "dark" side. Both sides, either human or computer-controlled, fight for control of the realm. You do this by moving your icons (playing pieces) to destroy all of your opponents or taking over the five "power points"—squares with blinking circles. When two opposing icons occupy the same square, they battle one another on a separate game screen to rightfully gain control of that square.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Ballblazer

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

Ballblazer is a futuristic version of soccer, where you play on a checkered field and move about in a rotofoil—a Hovercraft-type vehicle. In place of a soccer ball, you catch and shoot a glowing "plasmorb." Catching the plasmorb is as simple as running into it. And you shoot it into your goal for points while your opponent—friend or computer—tries to do the same. The two of you must fight for possession of the plasmorb by trying to ram it off each other's force field. Both players' field of view are shown on the horizontally split screen.

Barnyard Blaster

by Atari

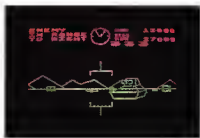


ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	1	SOUND	3

You and Gramps get to shoot up the farm in this game requiring the XG-1 light gun. As you both sit back for some country relaxation, critters begin to infest your new investment. Determined to have peace and quiet, you strap on your gun and blast them away through three different screens: the barnyard, cornfield, and barn. As a breather, Gramps tosses bottles spinning into the air for you to shoot to earn bonus points. To continue playing, you must score a certain accuracy percentage when you complete a screen.

Battlezone

by Atari



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	1	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	N	SOUND	2

In the near-future, it's your job to save the world from a vicious fleet of killer tanks that are programmed to destroy the world. You do so by hunting the enemy down on radar and blasting them to pieces with your vintage military tank. In addition to the normal, conventional enemy tanks, there are faster-moving supertanks and missiles that you must destroy as well. Saucers sent out to distract you during gameplay hover across the three-dimensional battlefield, tempting you to shoot them for bonus points.

Blue Max

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

You're the World War I flying ace, Blue Max, and your mission is to destroy the enemy headquarters located near the end of a river. The game is played from a three-dimensional angle perspective, allowing you to move your biplane up and down as well as forward, back, right and left. As you fly along the river, enemy planes fly by and try to shoot you down. Avoiding gunfire from the ground, you must also bomb enemy boats, tanks, and bridges. To refuel and reload your bombs, ally air bases are placed throughout the game.

Bug Hunt

by Atari



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	N	SOUND	3

You're an Atari game designer who must literally "debug" a circuit board. Bugs of different shapes and sizes suddenly appear on your circuit, and you have to blast them with your XG-1 light gun before they disappear. In order to advance to the next level, the present screen has to be completed with a certain percentage of bugs hit. Upon completion of a game, you're ranked anywhere from as low as a "C.E.O." to a "Troubleshooter." Quick reflexes and accurate shooting are needed in order to play *Bug Hunt* well.

Buyer's 1989 Guide



Flight Simulator II

by Atari



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	N	SOUND	2

This is really not a game but... well... a flight simulator, just as its name implies. You fly at the simulated instrument control panel of a Piper PA-28-181 Archer II, which performs much like a real airplane. Cloud cover, turbulence, and other hindrances are included to give you the feel of real flying. But the best part of the simulator is the topographical features that can be seen: the Sears Tower, the Statue of Liberty, Mt. Ranier, and plenty of others. And with an XE disk drive, you can load up scenery disks and fly to places as remote as Japan.

Food Fight

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	2	SOUND	3

In *Food Fight* you play Charley, a kid who loves to eat. You move Charley from the right side of the screen to the melting ice cream cone on the left side, so that he can devour it. However, four chefs are out to thwart your binge. They rise from manholes and try to stop you from winning your just desserts by touching you or flinging food at you. But you in turn can do the same to them by grabbing watermelon slices, bananas and other foods. As always, game play becomes progressively difficult as more screens are completed.

David's Midnight Magic

by Atari



ACTION	2	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	3	STRATEGY	2
MUSIC	N	SOUND	4

Pinball is, of course, the predecessor to modern-day video games. Now, all of the fun and excitement of pinball has been computerized on the XE Game System under the name *David's Midnight Magic*. You'll find the standard layout of a conventional pinball machine here—bumpers, targets, rollovers, kickers, and gutters. And there are also ball collectors, an extra pair of flippers, magic-save magnets, and a host of other features that make this simulation better than real pinball. You can even "tilt" this game!

Gato

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	N	SOUND	2

The year is 1943, and you're in command of a GATO-class submarine in deep Pacific waters. Upon receiving your mission in a coded message, you move out with your sub—either diving or cruising above the water's surface—and destroy an enemy convoy by launching torpedoes. You might also be assigned to rescuing an allied force stranded on an island or resupplying a spotter. But whatever the mission, you must do it quickly with only the supplies you carry on each patrol. With an XE disk drive, each mission is saved to disk.

Code Runner

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	2
GRAPHICS	2	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	N	SOUND	2

In *Code Runner* you are a Galactic Commando who has discovered the power-hungry Bungeling Empire's underground treasure hoard of gold. As Bungeling guards try to catch you, you must infiltrate all 150 subterranean levels and recover every piece of gold. Your only weapon is a laser drill, which drills pits through brick floors to trap guards or provide an escape channel for your player. You can also construct your own screens with the built-in game board editor. Custom-made screens may then be saved to disk with an XE disk drive.

Necromancer

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

You are Illuminar, a sorcerer of good who is the only one strong enough to challenge the evil Necromancer, Tetragorn. But before you can face off, you have to progress through two screens. In the first you need to grow as many trees as possible with your Wisp, a sparkling ring, as ogres try to club them down. As you advance to the vaults, you must destroy spider larvae before they hatch. And in Tetragorn's lair, the Necromancer himself appears and can only be defeated by quickly pushing over headstones while avoiding his fire.

Rescue on Fractalus

by Atari



ACTION	4	PLAYABILITY	3
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	4
MUSIC	4	SOUND	3

As a highly-trained air pilot, your mission is simple: rescue the Ethercorps space pilots stranded on Fractalus, an inhospitable planet of craggy mountains and canyons. Fractalus is an enemy Jaggi outpost armed with gun emplacements and kamikaze saucers. Also, the planet's atmosphere is made up of cyanitic acid, and the sun rises and sets every nine minutes. You must rescue downed pilots by landing your Valkyrie fighter, shutting off systems, and opening the air lock. A word of advice: be especially careful of *who* you pick up.

Star Raiders II

by Atari



ACTION	3	PLAYABILITY	4
GRAPHICS	4	STRATEGY	3
MUSIC	3	SOUND	3

Star Raiders II is the sequel to a classic Atari computer game. Just as in the original, the Zylon empire has returned to try to conquer your solar system once again. Equipped with a powerful starfighter, you battle their fleets of fighters and destroyers to defend your star bases and cities. But *Star Raiders II* is also an offensive game. In order to stop more enemy fleets from entering your system, you must warp to the Zylon's solar system and bomb their cities. Fast action, challenging game play and colorful graphics are guaranteed.



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Barnyard Blaster

A t a r i

Version: Atari XE Game System (\$24.95)

In *Barnyard Blaster*, Atari's second light-gun game for their XE Game System and 8-bit computers, you and your "Gramps" have bought the farm—literally. As the two of you sit back on your porch for some country relaxation, birds, animals and other critters begin to infest your entire farm. Determined to have the peace and quiet you've always sought (and already paid for), you strap on your gun and prepare to finish off the vermin, who have taken over your new investment.

Barnyard Blaster consists of four screens: the barnyard, the cornfield, the barn and Gramps' bonus screen. In the barnyard, you practice your aiming by shooting cans and bottles off a wooden fence. Out in the cornfield, you blast away watermelons and pumpkins for easy points and then progress to hitting scurrying rabbits and crows flying across the screen. Next, your shooting skills are tested to the limit in the barn. Here, a cavalcade of critters run by—ducks, chickens, birds, owls, rabbits and mice. As a breather, there's a bonus screen where Gramps tosses bottles spinning into the air for you to shoot and earn extra points, as well as hone your marksmanship. There's also a pesky gopher which may or may not appear af-



Barnyard Blaster for the Atari XE Game Machine is a good game despite its lack of excitement. Colorful graphics and good sound effects make up for its one fault.

ter the completion of a screen, challenging you to hit it before it goes back into its hole.

In each of the game's four screens you are given 40 bullets. The more accurately you shoot and the fewer bullets you use, the more points you earn. But the more screens you complete, the more precise your aiming must be in order for you to advance to the next screen. The game ends if your accuracy percentage is too low for you to progress to the following screen or if you happen to finish screen 36. If you complete screen 36, the animals give up and leave you and Gramps in peace.

The scoring for *Barnyard Blaster* is somewhat complicated. The longer it takes for you

to shoot something, the less points you'll earn. The smaller an object is or the faster it moves, the more points you'll receive if you hit it. When the game ends you're ranked anywhere from a "Total Dud" to a "Blaster," depending on the number of screens you've completed.

The graphics are impressive. All four screens are illustrated with careful detail, displaying many bright colors. Animation is smooth and flicker-free. In particular, the ducks waddling by the barn look amusing. Bottles, pumpkins and watermelons explode nicely when hit, while the animals neatly—and nonviolently—disappear in a blink.

The sound effects are also good. The bottles actually sound

like glass shattering when hit. Realistic-sounding gunshots go off whenever the light-gun's trigger is pulled, and the gun makes the sound of a clicking hammer when you've run out of bullets. However, the game's rendition of "Old MacDonald" quickly becomes annoying, even though it's played only at the end of each screen. Fortunately, the music can be turned off simply by pressing the option key.

Unlike Atari's *Bug Hunt*, the light gun fires with precise accuracy in *Barnyard Blaster*, even on a standard television set—though this game isn't as fast-paced as the former. Light-gunners used to the lightning speed of *Bug Hunt* might find *Barnyard Blaster* much too easy and slow. But some may find this game's slower pace a blessing. *Barnyard Blaster* is easy to play, but it's definitely not an easy game to beat. Reaching screen 36 is very difficult.

Despite its lack of excitement in game play, *Barnyard Blaster* is a good game. Its colorful graphics and sound effects make up for its one fault. If anything, *Barnyard Blaster* makes for an excellent diversion on a lazy afternoon.

—Howard H. Wen

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Contra

K o n a m i

Version: Nintendo Entertainment Game System (\$39.95)

In the time that we've had a Nintendo machine at our house, the most popular game is, without a doubt *Contra* by Konami. It's funny because there isn't really anything extraordinarily new or unique about *Contra*, but the mixture of action and suspense is so perfect that it holds your attention and forces you to play over and over again.

Contra's scenario is also nothing new: You run and leap over the jagged battlefield terrain, blasting enemy warriors and missile-firing targets. In this case, you are trying to stop the Red Falcon—an alien with a vicious streak—from his efforts to take over the world. This creature has littered the jungle with hundreds of well-trained soldiers, all of which are trying hard to keep you from completing your dedicated mission.

At the start, you are dropped into the thick of the battle with just a simple machine gun as your weapon. As you go farther on, though, there are some targets that, when hit, reward you with one of seven special bonus symbols. Depending on the type of icon, your abilities to compete against the opponent are greatly enhanced. For example, an "S" symbol (the most powerful weapon you can acquire) changes your single-shot rifle into one with fanning shots—very helpful in gaining further

passage into the war zone. These bonuses are generally available in all levels, except for some scarce but powerful prizes like the "B" symbol which offers you temporary invincibility.

As you pass from level to level (there are eight of them), you're treated to different perspectives. For example, the first-level, the Jungle, is a scrolling, shooting match that pushes you from left to right. When you get to the second level, called Base 1, it's in simulated 3-D, and you have to move "into" the screen—a definite change in strategy and maneuvering. The third scene, the Waterfall, takes you from the bottom of the screen and scrolls upwards from there. This variety is another reason *Contra* doesn't strain your attention span, and, most of all, tests your ability to adapt to a changing environment.

Arcade lovers should note that *Contra* requires unflagging effort on your part if you wish to succeed. As if getting by all of the jumping and shooting soldiers wasn't hard enough, each level ends with a "sensor," a device that notifies the Falcon of your progress. Each of the obstacles throws everything but the kitchen sink at you, and is very hard to get past. And when you do make it to the next scene, you'll face a new set of challenges.

The most fun, though it is

quite a bit of work to coordinate, comes from playing a cooperative game with another player. Each player has an on-screen character to take control of—but thankfully you can't kill each other with your guns. It took my nephew and I a few hours to complete the entire contest, and even with his help, the ordeal was an edge-of-the-seat affair. It would be much more difficult for a single player to finish the scenario.

There are many games coming out for the NES system, with the count to hit 100 very soon. This means that when you go to the store to pick up a new title, you need to wade through a great many boxes to find one that strikes your fancy. If you are an avid arcade-game lover, *Contra* comes highly recommended.

Secret hint: *Contra* normally provides you with three commandos to start, but there is a little-known method of popping that beginning troop count up to 30! Here's what you have to do:

When you power up the game, you'll have a few seconds of title screen and music before the game goes into its demo mode. You'll have to work quickly, but during this time, hit the Select button, and then move the controller in the following directions: up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right. Before the music finishes, hit the B button, fol-

lowed by the A button, and then the Start button. If everything goes correctly, you'll see the number 30 next to the REST title (before the game starts), which is how many men you have to work with. Don't get discouraged if that doesn't happen; the game is picky about how you do it. If the combination doesn't work, just hit the Reset button and try again.

If you are competing with two players, you can follow the same pattern to get each player started with 30 guys, but before you hit the Start button to get the game going, push the Select button one more time to choose the "2 PLAYERS" selection. Each player should show a REST total of 30.

Konami has *Contra* programmed to allow three continues from the beginning of the last level you were working on, before it makes you start entirely over again. The best part of this bonus is that each time you choose to continue, you'll start with 30 new men, without having to go through the above procedure again. This means that you have the opportunity to finish the contest using 90 men!

—by Andy Eddy

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Nintendo Strategy Guide

Blaster Master

by Sunsoft



The story

Blaster Master puts you inside a small, powerful subterranean assault vehicle: MetalAttacker. Jason Gardner has accidentally fallen into a pit and landed next to MetalAttacker, with no way out except to put on the helmet he has found inside the vehicle and try to find the exit back to the surface. To do this, he must traverse and conquer the eight areas of the underground world.

The game

Blaster Master is a one-player game. The goal is to move through each area destroying enemies, and, at the end of each area, finally defeat the Area Boss. The Bosses are very difficult to kill and different tricks and weapons are necessary to defeat each one. Whenever an Area Boss is destroyed you will receive a new part for MetalAttacker which will increase its power and allow you to move to the next area. Finally, in Area 8 you encounter the Plutonium Boss who is the leader of all of the underground mutants. When you eliminate him, you will leave the caverns and win the game. There is no score; making it to the outside is your main objective.

At any time during the game Jason can leave the caverns by pressing the SELECT button. Make sure that you are on a level place when you do this or Jason can fall and die. Also, make sure

that when Jason exits MetalAttacker that it is in an accessible spot where he can get back in. Jason cannot jump the same distance that he can fall.

Below is a list of the parts you will acquire at each area when the Area Boss is defeated:

AREA 1

You start out moving from left to right. Stay on the area above ground. The lower ground is radioactive and MetalAttacker won't last long. Collect Power Capsules as you go so that you are always at full power. The first "base" you must enter is found at the bottom of a ladder. Jason must exit the ship and climb down. There is a guard at the base; so jump on the ground to the right and shoot the guard until it is destroyed. Push down on the controller while standing in front of the entrance to enter the base.

Use the "A Button" to kill the enemies in this gate. The grenades work faster than the gun, which is very weak right now. Go into the next room and shoot the guard statue. Watch out for the circling spheres protecting the guard. When the guard is destroyed you usually get an object that will boost your gun's power. The first gun power-up extends the gun's range to unlimited distance. Shoot the blocks, and in the right corner you will find some objects. Collect them all. Leave and re-enter this base as many times as you can to boost the gun's power all the way!

Trick: If you hold the "A Button" down you can move backward without turning around. This only works when you are inside of a base.

When you get back into the ship, go right and down to get to the next few bases. Some of them are underwater. Jason should leave MetalAttacker and swim; he can go much faster

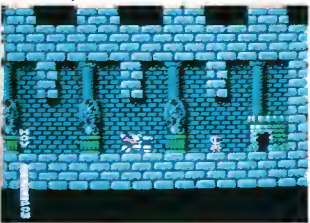
on his own than in the ship. You can pick up some Heat-Seeking Missiles underwater that will destroy enemies without MetalAttacker having to point at them.

Push down on the controller while pressing the "B Button" to fire missiles. The Area 1 Boss can be found in the top right base above the second body of water. This boss's name is Cramitor. To kill him concentrate on his head using the grenade (B Button). When this boss is defeated you acquire enough cannon strength to destroy the wall leading into Area 2.

AREA 2

Mysterious ancient ruins

This area is made of rock and brick. It is very big, so be careful not to get lost. Also be careful not to fall into the lava pools—they drain your energy quickly. The base shown below in Area 2 doesn't really have much in it. You will probably lose more than what you will gain. Don't go in unless you have to.



Don't bother with this base; it's not worth going into.

Area 1—Crusher

Boosts MetalAttacker's cannon so that less shots are required to defeat enemies. Also allows your vehicle to destroy the wall leading into Area 2.

Area 2—Crasher

Boosts cannon power even further. Now you can destroy walls in Area 3 and eliminate enemies with great ease.

Area 3—Hover

Gives MetalAttacker the ability to hover or fly for short periods of time.

Area 4—Key

You need this key to get to Area 5.

Area 5—Dive

Turns MetalAttacker into a "submarine" enabling it to move about underwater with ease.

Area 6—Wall 1

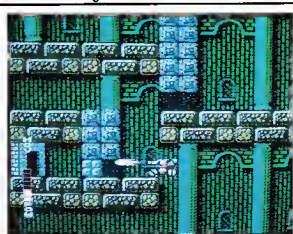
Now you can drive up walls. You can't get to Area 7 without this!

Area 7—Wall 2

Drive on the ceilings. Area 8 cannot be reached without Wall 2. Now MetalAttacker is fully armed!

Area 2 is actually connected to Area 7, but you can't get to 7 until you get Wall 1, when the Area Boss in 6 is destroyed.

When you get to Base 5, where the Area Boss is, you can go directly to his room by continually going up and right. If you need more power for your gun, then collect some objects before facing Area Boss 2. When you enter the Boss's room, go immediately to the lower left of the screen. The Boss's name is Guizzara and his weak point is his mouth. Use only the gun to defeat him, and point in one direction only. When you kill him, MetalAttacker gets Crasher.



To get to Area 3, get Crasher and blast your way through this wall!

AREA 3

The machine empire

This is like a big underground factory, with a lot of strange machinery. The enemies have many different ways of attacking, so proceed with caution!

Trick: After passing through the second portal in Area 3, you will be in Room 3. This room contains a secret passage connecting to the last part of Area 3. When you defeat the Area Boss 3, you

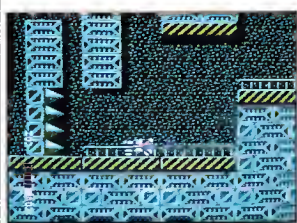


The secret passage in Area 3. Though MetalAttacker can't go in down the passage, only up, blast away the two rows of bricks, then drive right. After Z-88 is defeated, Hover up and continue to blast through the remaining bricks, then proceed to Area 4.

can use Hover to get to the passage and blast your way through to get out of Area 3 quicker. This passageway is found near the bottom left of Room 3. This passage only works in one direction, from down to up.

Trick: Remember Room 3. On the left side is a wall with some spikes (don't let MetalAttacker hit them!). When you acquire Wall 2 in Area 7,

you must go back to this room and drive on the ceiling above spikes, thus the entrance to Area 8.



To enter Area 8 from Area 7 you must first acquire Wall 2 and return to this room in Area 3. MetalAttacker must drive on the ceiling above the spot where the vehicle is shown here. Watch out for the spikes!

To destroy the "bomb throwers," get very close to them; then they cannot hit you with the bombs they throw out. Some of the Gates contain LASER PODs. They can be destroyed from the sides; that way Jason won't get injured by them when he attempts to shoot them. The grenades work best.

Hint: This base contains a lot of energy, so be sure and go inside. Be sure that you have full energy for your gun before you attempt to kill the Area Boss 3.

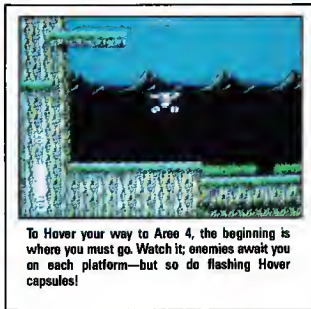


This base, wall into Area 3, contains many items, but beware of the LASER Pods.

Z-88, the boss in Area 3, takes a while to kill. Only shoot at the object that moves. When you finally defeat Z-88, you get Hover.

Use the shortcut passage mentioned previously to get out of Area 3. You'll need Hover to get to the passage.

To get to Area 4, you must go all the way back to Area 1, at the very beginning! Drive MetalAttacker to the leftmost part of the screen. You must have full Hover power. To use Hover, push the "B Button" twice, very quickly. There are several platforms that you must land on and get additional Hover capsules. Watch out! Enemies await you there too! The final platform is very high up, and you'll need full power. This is tricky, you may need to try it several times, but don't give up—it can be done.

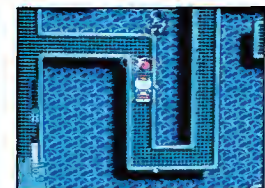


To Hover your way to Area 4, the beginning is where you must go. Watch it; enemies await you on each platform—but so do flashing Hover capsules!

AREA 4

The slime caves

Don't fall into the sewage; it is dangerous for MetalAttacker. To get to Area 5, you must have



The narrow paths inside this base are guarded by robots everywhere. Stay on the walk; the sewage pools are bottomless!

a key. You get the key when the Area Boss is destroyed. Area 4 contains a huge maze in one room, with three bases. These bases are very dangerous. Only enter the one where the boss



This base is tricky but is worth entering for missiles and more power.

is, unless you really need missiles or energy. You will also need Hover to get around in the maze. To get to the boss's base, go to the very, very bottom right, then all the way left. You'll leave the slime area and go to a different-looking room. Jason must leave the vehicle and climb the ladder.

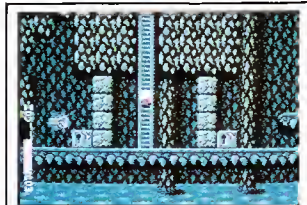
The Area Boss is Rivet. It is very easy to kill, and you don't need full gun energy to do it. Just shoot a lot of grenades into its mouth. Be care-



Don't worry, this isn't lava or sewage, just water. MetalAttacker won't be damaged.

ful of it's fiery tongue!

When you get the key, go to where the lock is. Get out of the vehicle and climb the ladder that is between the two stone columns. Go right and jump off the cliff, falling just to the right of the first freestanding, vertical brown stripe. You will land safely on a ladder. Simply jump off of the ladder, go left and open the lock; a door will appear!



Climb the ladder and jump to the right side at the top.

AREA 5

The savage underwater world

MetalAttacker is very clumsy and slow underwater; you need the Dive feature. To get this, you must kill the Area Boss 5. Dive permits MetalAttacker to move much faster and further underwater. To get this option, Jason must leave the ship and find the boss. The boss is easy to get to and kill; its name is Monster Crab. Its weak point is also the mouth. Use your gun and aim carefully. As soon as Crab is defeated, get Dive and leave immediately.

Now MetalAttacker is a submarine and can move freely underwater.



Get out and swim! Jason is on his own—and very vulnerable.

AREA 6

Ice caves

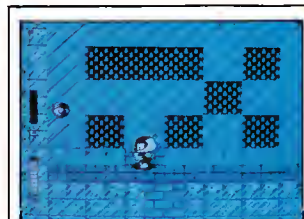
MetalAttacker slides easily on the ice, and most of the platforms are icy, so avoid them. Some bases don't have slippery floors, those are the ones to go for. It is fairly easy to get objects, but watch out for the Gundam, the robot guards.

To get to the main base, you must drive up while shooting blocks of ice. When you get to the top, drive on the ice platforms until you get to the other side and work your way down. Careful, some of the rooms have a long drop! Some of the bases in Area 6 are very risky—don't go in unless you are very good and need items.



Go up while shooting your way through the blocks of ice, and you are on your way to Area 7.

When you reach the Area Boss, Neo Guizzara, be sure your gun is fully charged. Don't get damaged; you'll need full power to kill it.



The spikes on the floor may look easy to walk around, but wait until you start sliding into them!

Again, the mouth is the weakest point, so aim for it. This boss shoots hail from its mouth—keep away from them or you'll lose tremendous power.

When this boss is killed you will have Wall 1. Now MetalAttacker can walk up walls and get to areas it never could.

AREA 7

Savage furnace

To get to Area 7 you must go back to Area 2 and drive up the far left wall in the tower room, the room with a door at the top right and bottom right. Area 7 is filled with a lot of magma. Don't fall in! The first base has pools of bubbling lava; so watch out. This base is fairly easy. Shoot rocks

to get items; the rocks must be broken strategically so that you can proceed where you want to go.



Is this the portal from Area 2 into Area 7?

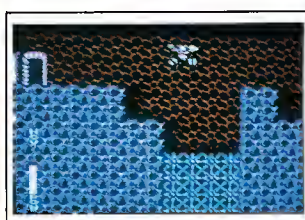
Leave and re-enter this base many times; it is quite lucrative. The Area Boss is Fire Frog. Beware of its fire bullets. The strategy is the same as Rivet—aim for the mouth; but this time shoot grenades from the side.

When you defeat this boss, you get Wall 2 allowing MetalAttacker to drive on walls and ceilings.

AREA 8

The demon cell

Now MetalAttacker is *fully armed*! To get to Area 8, drive to the previously mentioned spot in Area 3. You must drive on the ceiling and up over the spiked wall.



The thorn patches in Area 7 are dangerous to your vehicle. Hover or jump over them. Now things really get tough!

This level is a weird, organic place. You'll need all your options, including Hover to get over tricky places. One room has two bases, one on the top right and one on the bottom right. You'll need Hover to get to the top base. The bottom base has two ways to go, an upper level and a lower one. Take the lower path; it is easier and the base contains many items. Be sure to get full Hover energy.

When you get to the final base, you will come face to face with Scarab, which you must also attempt to kill by shooting its mouth.

Finally, you meet Demon Lord, the Plutonium Boss. You'll need good footwork to win. And watch out for its long whip; keep moving to avoid it. If you beat Demon Lord, you are free and win the game! Your lone battle is over!

—Lee H. Pappas



Archon Strategies and Tips

A t a r i X E G a m e S y s t e m

Archon is best described as a chess game where the chessmen come to life to fight for the right to occupy a square. Originally developed on the Atari computers by Anne Westfall, Jon Freeman and Paul Reiche III of Freefall Associates and published on disk by Electronic Arts, Archon has remained a timeless classic and perennial favorite ever since it was released way back in 1983. Now re-released by Atari on cartridge format for their XE Game System, this is one game that still stands apart from the rest for its unique blend of action and strategy.

The best way to play Archon is against another person, matching your wits and video-gaming skills with that of a friend—or foe. That's where the real challenge lies. Though the computer itself plays aggressively, it's probably the easiest opponent to defeat—once you learn how to control and move your icons (playing pieces). The computer simply reacts to your actions and doesn't seem to be capable of effectively attacking your icons. Playing either the Dark or Light side, it's even possible for you to beat the computer in less than three minutes—or with just one icon! But in order to do this, you need to be very familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of each icon on the game board.

Here's a complete breakdown of every icon on the 8x8 game board, its importance to game play and tips on how to—and not to—use them during play:

Goblin (Dark) and knight (Light): Each of the seven goblins on the Dark side and the seven knights on the Light side are essentially equal to one another. They are equivalent to the pawns of chess. When playing the computer, don't bother moving your goblins or knights—you'll just be wasting a turn. You should move a goblin or knight only to avoid a confrontation with one of the computer's icons. When two people play, both players should quickly relocate their goblins or knights onto squares of their own color, as these are the weakest icons on the board.

Dragon (Dark) and djinni (Light): The Dark side's one dragon and the Light's djinni (or genie) are best suited for offensive purposes. In both human vs. human and human vs. computer play, these two icons are invaluable for their strength and deadly shooting. Use them to wipe out your opponent's

weakest icons first.

Troll (Dark) and golem (Light): Both of these icons are slow movers and slow shooters (they throw rocks). Avoid having to face these playing pieces off against faster human- or computer-controlled icons.

Manticore (Dark) and archer (Light): The lion-like manticores and the archers match one another in speed and firing. They're best used defensively on the game board and for emergency purposes when your more powerful icons are lost.

Basilisk (Dark) and unicorn (Light): Believe it or not, these are the most powerful icons in Archon. Although their strength levels are somewhat low, they move the fastest and fire with lightning speed in the combat arena. They are so powerful that, when playing against the computer, it's possible to use only one basilisk or unicorn to kill all of your computer opponent's icons. Use them offensively on both the game board and in the combat arena.

Phoenix (Light): Despite the impression that the instruction manual gives, the phoenix is actually one of the weakest icons on the Light side. In fact, if you're playing the Dark side, you can use a measly goblin to kill it! Just run your goblin close to the phoenix and quickly move away as your opponent (human or computer) begins to "fire up." Then, before your opponent can ignite his phoenix again, move the goblin back and quickly pound the bird with your club. Repeat this until the phoenix is killed. Because of this one weakness, you should avoid using the phoenix icon if you're playing the Light side. Even though its strength level is strong and it's protected from enemy attack when enflamed, it takes a frustratingly long time to kill many of your opponent's icons with the phoenix.

Banshee (Dark): Functioning similarly to the phoenix, the banshees "scream" up a deadly field around themselves that drains the energy of Light icons caught near it. But, unlike the phoenix, the banshees can still move while in this state. However, these icons of the Dark are not protected from enemy attack by their emitted field. If you're playing the Dark side, use your banshees to destroy knights on light-colored squares.

Shapeshifter (Dark): The one shapeshifter on the Dark side is in a class all its own. It's equal to any one of the Light's icons because, when in the com-

bat arena, it assumes the power and shape of the opposing icon. Another advantage of the shapeshifter is that it never needs to be healed; it always heals itself whenever it takes on another form. Amazingly enough, the computer player doesn't seem to recognize this and will try to take advantage of your icon's supposed weakened state after a battle.

For example, if your shapeshifter is injured while winning a square, the computer will attack it again—even on a black square—thinking that the shapeshifter is weakened. You can use this to your advantage by placing the shapeshifter on black squares near computerized Light icons and purposely letting it become injured in the combat arena. Always place the shapeshifter on black or dark squares where it's most powerful. If you're playing the light side, just ignore the shapeshifter, but make sure your icons are on white or light squares.

Valkyrie (Light): The Light's two valkyries move quickly in the combat arena yet fire slowly. The best way to use valkyries is against Dark icons that shoot equally as slow. Otherwise, defeating the enemy's playing pieces with these icons is difficult.

Sorceress (Dark) and wizard (Light): The sorceress' and wizard's greatest value are the spells they cast. They both have the same seven spells, all of which are needed when playing against a human player. But if you're challenging the computer, you'll probably need only the teleport spell to quickly move your first icon from your side to your opponent's. As a general rule, never move your sorceress or wizard off its power point square.

Keep in mind that the strategies used for challenging the computer aren't necessarily the same as those used when playing against a human player. However, if you're a good enough player to beat the computer every time, you'll probably be able to cream most humans too.

Unfortunately, being a star player has its downside. You could soon find yourself without any worthy opponents.

—Howard H. Wen

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The Game Doctor Answers Your Questions:

by The Game Doctor

It's become standard procedure on my first appearance in a new magazine to tackle certain "most asked" questions. So let's get that out of the way before moving on to other questions.

Q: Are most video and computer games designed in the United States, the Far East or Europe?

A: Up until the mid-'80s, virtually all the computer entertainment software sold in the U.S. was also produced here, with only token representation by the British and almost nothing by the Japanese. Even computer versions of Nipponese coin-ops were rolled over by U.S. programming houses.

The small amount of British software that crossed the Atlantic was relegated almost exclusively to the discount bins. While not necessarily poor games, the early-'80s U.K. product was, at best, utterly generic.

The latest video-game explosion brought an influx of Japanese games to the American marketplace. European design and programming standards have matured, meanwhile, to the point where British and French design groups are now producing many of our biggest hits.

Some of the more recognizable titles produced by European game creators include: *Bubble Ghost* and *Captain Blood* from Infogrames of France, *The Pawn* by Magnetic

Scrolls, U.K., Audiogenic Software Ltd.'s *Blockbuster*, *Plasmatron* from The Zen Room, *Winter Challenge* by Tynesoft, I. Bell/D. Braben's *Elite*, *Into the Eagle's Nest* courtesy Pandora Software and many, many others.

Not only are foreigners producing a lot of the software we play, but the reverse is also true: Europe and Japan have developed into strong secondary markets for software made in the U.S.A. Pre-production sale of foreign rights often provide American publishers with the capital to finance the creation of the game.

Q: Whatever happened to text adventures?

A: Like vaudeville, silent movies and radio drama, text adventures have become a creative dead end, a game format that is no longer viable because its audience has moved on to new less demanding forms of interactive entertainment.

Much as people talk about the joy of "using your imagination," most folks would just as soon see a character as read a description of them, no matter how deft and evocative the prose used in the summation.

Although there has always been an audience for text adventures, many more potential users were either turned off or intimidated by the genre's intrinsic limitations. Much of the user's puzzle-solving

energy is spent guessing exact words and phrases envisioned by the game's writer.

Alternative interfaces, many using menus and/or object-oriented systems have opened up the adventure genre to a wider audience.

Q: I'm familiar with the previous attempts at 3-D video games and am wondering why Sega's system is so much better? Also, why doesn't the Sega system use standard 3-D glasses?

A: Sega doesn't use the traditional system of a red lens and a blue lens, which act as filters on most 3-D systems. Instead, Sega uses a "shutter" system which opens and closes the lenses of the 3-D glasses at high speeds in synch with the on-screen action, producing a remarkable illusion of depth. This is also why the Sega glasses are so cumbersome and must be plugged directly into the console.

Q: Will any new computers with game-playing potential be introduced in 1989?

A: The home-computer market is still adjusting to the entrance of the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Apple GS and the MS-DOS machines onto the home scene, all within the last few years.

Apple is likely to lower the prices on its GS and Mac II (the color Macintosh), however, and will introduce an upgrade which gives standard Macs color display and some Mac II-style features, but that's

about as close to a new system as we're likely to get!

Q: How do I take advantage of the various "online" services supposedly available to computer users?

A: You need a couple of things besides the computer, disk drive and monitor itself. You need a modem and, of course, a membership in the services of your choice (the most popular being DELPHI, QLink, CompuServe and The Source). While QLink provides terminal software as part of the membership, most such services require the user to have some sort of telecommunications software.

Finally, you need a telephone compatible with telecommunications. The best phones for this are the old-fashioned AT&T touch-tone carriage model. Phones with the rotary or button dial in the receiver will not work in some cases.

Q: Why do versions of the same game vary so much in quality from one computer to another?

A: There are several reasons, most of them pretty obvious. For one thing, different computers have different strengths and weaknesses. The Apple II series, for example, doesn't have "sprite" generating capability, which handicaps all attempts at quality graphics. The Atari ST, although a powerful 16-bit computer, has an awful sound chip.

The other big reason is that different programming groups often produce the various system "rol-lovers" of a game. So, while the group producing the C64 version of a game might be top notch, the people turning out the MS-DOS version may have been asleep at the switch.

Q: Do video games hurt TVs? Do they hurt your eyes? Are they addictive?

A: Video games don't hurt TVs, in general, though there are some individual games which are not

recommended for play on certain large-screen projection-beam sets. The notion that video games are harmful to television sets stems from the fact that the earliest ball-and-paddle games did not always feature proper shielding, and that infamous dotted vertical line occasionally left a permanent imprint down the front of TV screens when it burned out the tube's phosphors.

There is no evidence to indicate that video games are harmful to human eyes. Of course, staring fixedly into a bright screen for excessive lengths of time isn't good for anyone. In fact, there have been several attempts around the country to have strict regulations imposed on employers who use CDTs (Computer Display Terminals). A Long Island community was poised to adopt strict legislation in the wake of a report indicating that workers who spent extended periods at CDTs suffered from after-effects (the law was not passed, however, for fear it would drive out business).

What the tests did not prove, however, was that these ill-effects were caused by the CDT. Several alternative theories have been suggested (including the possibility that computers are so efficient that workers don't have to move very much, therefore suffer from this lack of mobility). Research into this area has yet to reach significant conclusions.

To be safe, don't play video games in a dark room, since this strains the eyes. Otherwise, there is nothing to indicate any danger from recreational contact with video games. Electronic games have, in fact, been used in the treatment of diseases such as dyslexia.

As for video games being addictive, it's true that some compulsive personality types do spend unhealthy amounts of time playing video games. The same can be

said, however, of TV, movies, baseball cards and dozens of other pleasurable activities.

Video games are at least preferable to TV and movies in that they are interactive entertainment and don't encourage the excessively passive behavior we in the pseudo-medical profession refer to as "sofa spud syndrome."

Q: Who invented video games?

A: We've got to go with Ralph Baer as the man who first conceived the idea of an electronic entertainment medium which could exploit the vast number of TV sets in operation.

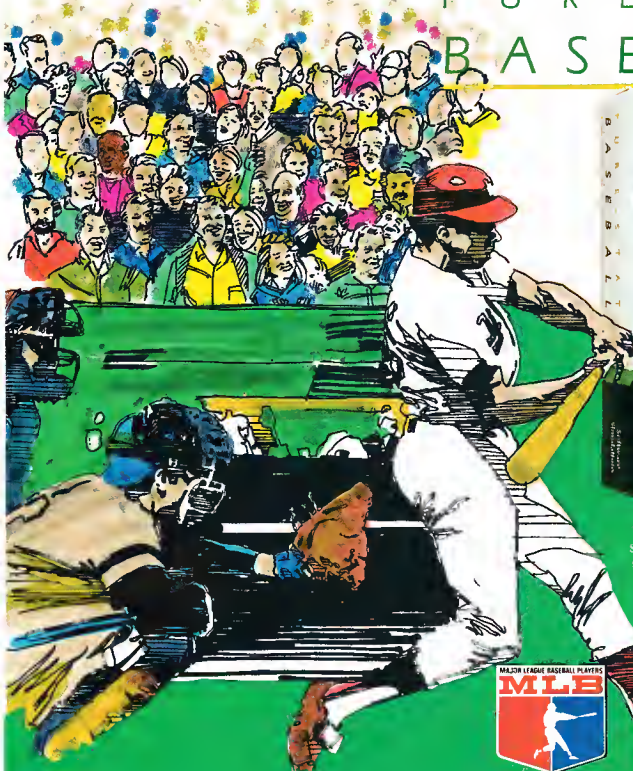
Baer's company, Sanders Associates, working for Magnavox, developed the video-game system released in 1971 as the Odyssey. In fact, one of the games he developed for his "programmable video-game system" was a video Ping-Pong simulation that used a dotted line for a net and a pair of moveable rectangles as paddles. Atari subsequently paid approximately one million dollars in settlement when Magnavox took them to court after Nolan Bushnell released "Pong."

The original Odyssey was quite a sight by today's standards. The console was not especially large, but the controllers (with two paddle nobs and an "English" switch) looked like a clock radio and were connected to the CPU by what looked like coaxial cables. Since the system could not generate background graphics, Magnavox included a series of plastic overlays to tape to the TV screen.

The Odyssey was a dismal failure due to Magnavox' poor marketing, but its place in video-game history is secure. Take a bow, Mr. Baer!

Got a question for the Game Doctor? Send it to: **THE GAME DOCTOR**, P.O. Box 020541, Brooklyn, NY 11202-0012. I'll do my best to answer it! See you next issue.

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The Digital Gridiron

A History of Electronic Football Simulations

by Bill Kunkel and Arnie Katz



Photo by Louis Raynor

Ah, football! The smell of astroturf in the freezing winter air, the rhythmic roar of the crowd as it screams for the other team's blood and, best of all, the thunderous crash of massively muscled bodies meeting with bone-splintering impact.

Now there's a game for you!

Football appeals to the straightforward tastes of the American sports fan. If all sports are symbolic warfare, then American-style football stands out for its willingness to dispense with the symbols and get right down to the business of mayhem.

Football is a primal struggle be-

tween two evenly-matched armies fought on a symmetrical battlefield. The overall objectives are self-evident, and the results of each skirmish, or scrimmage, are similarly apparent, even to the uninitiated. At the same time, football's strategy and tactics are endlessly complex. The coach's plans for the offense and defense require

sophisticated charts and three-inch thick playbooks full of meticulous diagrams. The pigskin soldiers study these playbooks as devotedly as any West Point class pores over Clauswitz.

Design difficulties

Every sport has elements which are hard to transfer to the home-

gaming screen, but for the game designer, simulating football in an electronic environment presents a very different set of problems. Baseball is the simplest of sports to re-create, since events occur consecutively. On offense, the user controls the batter; on defense, the pitcher. If the ball is hit to the shortstop, defensive control can be instantly reassigned to that fielder.

In football, the user traditionally controls the quarterback on offense and the middle linebacker on defense. The rest of the team must remain under computer control while they try to execute

stant a pass is complete, the user takes control over the receiver.

On defense, the user directs the middle linebacker with much more emphasis on selecting the proper defensive play. No matter how skillfully the user manipulates the MLB, it doesn't do much good if the team gets burned on coverage—choosing to blitz, for example, on a running play or slanting the wrong way on a hand-off. The user must basically decide whether he wants his MLB to rush the passer or to hang back and look for an interception. He then sets the defensive formation and calls a play that will complement the strategy.

Video-game action

Before the birth cries of programmable video-game systems had even died, there were football games to play on them. Atari produced no fewer than three gridiron games for its 2600 alone. The earliest, the above-mentioned Football, featured three-man teams (though the players looked a lot more like Space Invaders than the Chicago Bears) on a non-scrolling, vertical playfield. Between the horrendous blinking of the on-screen characters and the distracting color bands representing the field of play, Football was a real nonstarter.

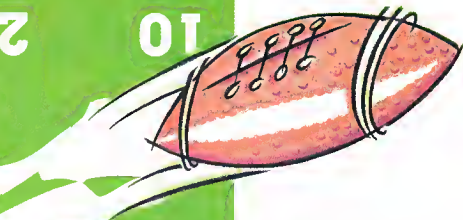
A few years later, Atari upgraded its sports games with the RealSports line which included a superior football entry, *RealSports Football*. While featuring no great innovations, RealSports Football employed the features from more successful simulations.

Historically, just about every video-game manufacturer has produced pigskin play. When Mattel began producing 2600 versions



Football by SubLOGIC

of their Intellivision titles, one of the first games they released was, you guessed it, *M Network Football*. Again, there was very little to distinguish this version of programmable pigskin from the many others, but it was a credible entry.



Odyssey2 and the Bally Professional Arcade both offered football games of higher quality than the earliest Atari offering. The Odyssey2 *Football* used a horizontal gridiron, which worked better than Atari's vertical one, but it didn't scroll, which compressed the action into an unrealistic space. Bally's *Football* scrolled, offered quality graphics and easy play. The only real drawback was its limited play selection, which was common to all the early football video games.

the strategic possibilities of the program.

Nin-ten-yard fight

Contemporary football video games make no great advances over those earlier entries in terms of design, but they do generally look nicer, an advantage of the superior hardware systems they play on, and they are invariably easier to play. This new generation of football action games are coin-op translations and show it: Play-calling is minimal and the empha-



Touchdown Football by Electronic Arts on the C-64: intro screen

whatever plan the user selected prior to the start of play.

The biggest decision the designer must make, however, concerns what *kind* of simulation the game will represent. Football games come in three basic flavors: action, strategy and action-strategy, and we'll examine them one at a time.

Action, action, action!

Action games were the earliest form of football simulation, and they dominate video-game systems to this day. The quality of these games has varied greatly, from the woeful Atari 2600 *Football* to Imagic's excellent computer game, *Touchdown*.

The orientation of action football games centers around the user's direct control over certain key players. In most action games, the gamer selects a play from a menu and, with the snap of the ball, takes control over the quarterback who can then either run or throw. In some action games, the user selects the direction of the pass while in others the type of pass (sideline, deep, short, over the middle, etc.) is preselected. In the latter type, the object is to line up the QB so the pass will connect with the pre-programmed route of the wide receiver(s). Standard procedure then reassigns control to the player with the ball. Therefore, the in-

The Mattel Intellivision video-game system was virtually designed to play sophisticated sports simulations. Mattel programmers tackled football early on with *NFL Football* and produced a big gainer. The Intellivision pigskin contest offered more extensive play options, smooth scrolling graphics and the extra impact of an NFL endorsement. If anything, NFL Football was criticized at the time of its release in the early '80s for being too complicated with its mini-NFL playbook and detailed documentation that confused less-knowledgeable football fans.

It was also something less than a totally optimal program. There were only five players on each side for one thing, and, more importantly, there was no solitary version, since the computer couldn't handle

sis is on action at the expense of strategy. NFL Football remains far more cerebral and sophisticated a simulation than any of the contemporary video games.

Nintendo's entry into the gridiron sweepstakes is *10-Yard Fight*, a vertically-scrolling coin-op translation that concentrates on running plays and passes with a minimum of strategic input. Designed for user simplicity with its highly streamlined play, *10-Yard Fight* should satisfy action fans but may prove a little thin for fans who prefer more play-calling.

Before each play, the user on defense designates one of two defensive backs as the player under his direct control. The computer selects formations and, once the ball is snapped, runs every player but the user's DB. Hitting



Perspective on the action

The vast majority of football games, action and otherwise, use an overhead-sideview hybrid showing the field from above while the players are seen from the side. This perspective continues to be used to this day—both of Sega's football games use a horizontally scrolling version of this viewpoint to good effect.

A more realistic perspective was developed: the grandstand view. *Imagic's Touchdown* and *Star League Football* are among the games which show the field from two-thirds perspective. Imagine sitting in the best seat in the house, and then picture being able to move up and down field with the action, as if on a rail that ran the length of the field.

Nintendo's *10-Yard Fight* employs a vertically scrolling variation on this realistic look, in which the play is seen as if from a helicopter hovering just behind the line of scrimmage and 25 yards or so above the field.

Vertically scrolling playfields became fashionable in recent years, finally overcoming the stigma of that first Atari game. Cinemaware's eyeball-popping *TV Sports Football* uses a ver-

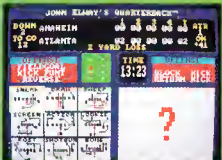
either of the controller's action buttons causes the defender to leap in the direction he's currently running. This leap, however, is a pretty big commitment and if the defensive back misses, it takes him some time to regain his feet.



Super Bowl Sunday by Avalon Hill

On offense, before the play begins, the wide receiver goes in motion. Once the user snaps the ball, the wide receiver turns and breaks across the line of scrimmage, heading upfield. This makes him useful as a designated blocker as well as a pass catcher.

Then the QB has several options. He can keep the ball and head up-



John Elway's Quarterback on the IBM PC

field, make a quick lateral to either the left or right running back, or hold the ball until the wide receiver becomes eligible and attempt to complete a long pass. It is even possible to call a flea-flicker by tossing off to a back and having him hit the wide receiver. All this is possible even with only two action buttons on the NES because of a clever innovation; eligible pass receivers lift their arms in the air to indicate their status.

There are some weaknesses in *10-Yard Fight*. On kickoffs, for example, the receiver is surrounded

by a phalanx of eight players who do not shift position for the entire return. I know the Romans were big believers in the flying wedge, but it's rarely been taken to such literal extremes. The sight of these nine players, in three three-player rows, moving lockstep up the field is one of the silliest elements of any football simulation. It apparently never occurred to the designers that all nine players would have to run at the same speed (as fast as the kick returner, one of the fastest positions on the squad) for this dubious tactic to work.

Also, every play is run from the shotgun, which is frequently less than desirable. Still, given the limitations of the input system, the variety of options are impressive.

The biggest drawback to *10-Yard Fight*, however, is the way the programmers show offensive player's movement. Instead of animating the players, the entire field rolls underneath them. Not only is this technique painfully transparent, but it gives the impression of players running through hot fudge. All on-screen movement, for that matter, is slower than it should be. The slowdown in motion takes several long seconds to move the length of the line and this dawdling hurts what should be a slam-bang contest.

The "great" series

Sega offers not one but two football games, *Great Football* and *Sports Pad Football*, with the latter playable only in conjunction with the Sega Sports Pad controllers.

Great Football is a program with a split personality: In two-player mode, it's a fairly traditional action football contest. But solitaire, it's a football variant, like *10-Yard Fight*, that should appeal to offense-minded football fanatics. The one-player version, in fact, is all offense. As play begins, the computer team is assigned a fixed

number of points which the user must better within the time allowed.

The competition isn't exactly spirited, but then the defenders are happy to surrender five or even ten yards a shot since the ground game scores points slowly and eats up the clock.

The background graphics are quite striking, especially the full-color eagle painted at midfield. But the players have a tendency to flicker and occasionally even split in half! The on-screen movement is very fast, requiring split-second reflexes on the user's part.

Great Football offers an interesting innovation: Possible plays are shown on screen in diagram form for the user to "confidentially" select in two-player games. This eliminates the need to keep the instruction booklet nearby when the game is played.

Sports Pad Football uses the same game design and graphics but capitalizes on the capabilities of the Sega Sports Pad controllers. This very responsive controller should greatly please anyone who has fond



The World's Greatest Football Game by Epyx

memories of playing coin-op games with a trackball. Other than the different feel of the controller, however, there is little difference between the two cartridges.

Action on computer

While most computer football games are of the strategy or action-strategy type, one of the very best action contests is *Imagic's Touchdown* (distributed by Electronic Arts). It is available for several systems, including the Commodore 64 but is best on the IBM PC (*Touchdown* originally appeared for the now-defunct IBM PCjr). Electronic Arts' *Touchdown Football* will also be available this fall for the Atari 7800 video-game system.

Touchdown combines all the best elements of the horizontally scrolling action games of the past into a game of satisfying complexity

that is very easy to play. Touch-down also attains that most elusive of goals: It *feels* like football.

Gamestar's *Star League Football*, one of the very first action football contests on computer, was a tough game to master but offered satisfying action and solid if unspectacular graphics.

Gamestar tried again several years later with the experimental *GFL Championship Football*. It was the perspective that made this game so interesting—the action is viewed through the eyes of the players on the field! Though not entirely successful (see “Perspective on the Action”), no other game communicates football's more kinetic elements half as well. You can almost feel the middle linebacker as he leaps into your quarterback's face.

John Elway's Quarterback (Melbourne House) brings the Leeland Courbe. coin-op machine to the home-computer gaming screen. One or two players control nine-man teams on a vertically scrolling playfield, shown from the same perspective as in 10-Yard Fight.

Players can run, pass and kick using either joystick or keyboard order entry. There are nine offensive plays and six for the defense. This slick home edition, available for most home-computer systems, should save action-loving football partisans a bucket of quarters.

The mind of football

Statistical football games, whatever their actual play mechanics, are all based on mathematical models which reproduce the actual performances of the athletes on the computer gaming screen.

Usually, the players in a statistical-replay football game are constructed so that they accurately reproduce the statistical totals of each griddier for the previous, real-life season.

Statistical football simulations differ from “Fantasy Football” leagues primarily in the way the player stats are applied to determining the result of the game. Whereas Fantasy Football is an abstract game, the computerist gets to coach every down of the game with a stat simulation.

If baseball is the easiest sport to analyze mathematically, football is certainly one of the hardest. In the national pastime, each ballplayer on the field applies his expertise se-



John Madden Football on the Apple

quentially, while the abilities of football players are frequently applied simultaneously.

Let's examine typical plays in both sports. The pitcher demonstrates his ability to hurl the baseball, and then the batter shows his ability to hit it. If the batter connects, the player to whom the ball is hit shows his fielding prowess. If the first fielder doesn't retire the batter or otherwise end the play, the skill of a second fielder is tested.

In football, all 11 players on both

teams swing into action the instant the center snaps the pigskin to the quarterback. It is fairly simple to set up the game so that a running back achieves the same yards-per-carry average as he did in the NFL,



On Field Football by Gamestar

but it is harder to inject the influence of the linemen who open the hole and the defenders who attempt to close it.

Most stat games assign ratings to linemen, linebackers and defensive backs in lieu of the solid numbers used to compute the models for offensive backs, receivers and kickers. Football simulations generally concentrate on simulating a team's offensive and defensive units, while also making players at the so-called “skill positions” reproduce their specific, prior-season statistics.

The World's Greatest Football Game (Epyx), the first major football simulation, did not even attempt to replicate individual player performance. Instead, this demanding strategy game permits users to make every conceivable strategic decision faced by an NFL coach. While some sideline strategists adored this extreme level of complexity, it has proven to be beyond the interests, and perhaps the capabilities, of most potential players. The lengthy process used to create a customized playbook for the electronic team has exhausted the interest and energy of more than one would-be Vince Lombardi.

The relatively cool reception which greeted the debut of *The World's Great Football Game* sent a crystal clear message to publishers. Football fans wanted a game which was playable as well as accurate and which utilized analogs of actual players, not artificial constructs.

Quest, Inc.'s *Super Bowl Sunday* (Avalon Hill) fits those requirements perfectly. It provides a series of on-screen menus from which the coaches can easily select their desired offensive and defensive



tical scroll with a realistic perspective, as will Software Simulations' omnibitious *Pure-Stat Football*.

The most unusual perspective of all, however, is the Quarterback POV (Point-of-View) depicted in Gamestar's *GFL Championship Football*. In this action game, the user is brought down onto the field and sees everything through the eyes of the quarterback and middle linebacker.

This bold experiment was not entirely successful. Graphic limitations and the lack of peripheral vision make GFL a very confusing game to follow. Nonetheless, no other sports simulation even comes close to this program for putting the user into the shoes of an on-the-field player.

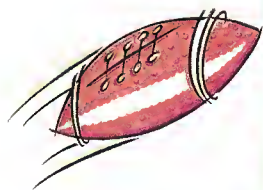
Computer Sports World:

A source for stats

Members of simulations leagues usually have an insatiable appetite for statistics. Every franchise owner wants to know how his or her players are doing in the current season because that performance serves as the basis for the following season's league. And, of course, there are rookies and overnight sensations to study with on



Detailed graphics on the Amiga TV Sports Football by CinemaWare



eye toward the annual free-agent draft.

Football fans who can't get enough statistics and game summaries from their local newspaper might consider signing up for Computer Sports World (CSW), 1005 Elm St., Boulder City, NV 89005. This nationwide computer network presents on incredible array of statistics and news about all major sports, including football. The monthly cost might seem a little high except to really avid football fans, but the cost isn't as frightening if split among the members of a six- or eight-team football league.

The data is timely and accurate. A simple system of three-letter codes allows the user to get statistics for several post seasons as well as the one in progress. Team and individual numbers are both offered, so there's something here for every league format.

Data can be read right on the screen or downloaded. The latter method allows the user to print out convenient hard copies.

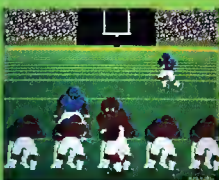
CSW has a one-time sign-up charge of \$69.95, plus a charge for each minute spent online. The cost is 63¢ to 96¢ a minute during the day, and 43¢ to



TV Sports Football from CinemaWare

play. When the machine has received orders for both sides, the screen shows the result of the play in full-screen animation.

Graphics are a new wrinkle for stat football games. The earliest such games, like *Computer Football* (SSI) and *Monday Morning Quarterback* (Automated Simulations, now Epyx) offered only the most meager visuals. The player



GFL Football by Activision on the Commodore 64

saw the upcoming play and its aftermath as an arrangement of "x"s and "o"s on a football field viewed from overhead.

Avalon Hill also offers extra team disks, including batches of all-time great teams, to add variety to *Super Bowl Sunday*. The company has also released an extra disk which accumulates statistics and facilitates trades. (Software Simulations, the folks who designed the original, also makes a stat compiler for the game.)

Although there are several promising programs currently on the drawing board, *Super Bowl Sunday* is still the top statistical football game on the market. It combines a lively visual presentation with sound statistics more effectively than any other program of

its kind.

Three-in-One Football (Lance Haffner Games) can't match *Super Bowl Sunday*'s visual impact, but its finely tuned statistics are perfect for the truly dedicated stat replay fan. It even measures gains and losses in fractions of a yard!

An incredible array of pro and college teams are available, far more than are offered for any other football program. The selection includes both current and famous teams of the past.

Ironically, *Three-in-One Football* requires less knowledge of player performance than other stat-replay simulations. After the computerist chooses a play, the program automatically determines which members of the current on-field unit actually handle the ball.

Streamlining the play-calling process in this manner makes *Three-in-One Football* as fast-paced as it is accurate. Though Lance Haffner's design may not thrill casual fans, it is an excellent choice for computerists who want



An MS-DOS compatible screen of Activision's Football

to conduct extensive replays.

Along with *Super Bowl Sunday*, Avalon Hill also publishes *Mac Pro Football*. One or two coaches can

guide the fortunes of any of the 40 past and present NFL teams included in the two-disk package. The only limitation is that it is not possible to match two different teams from the same franchise, which eliminates a few of the most provocative potential matchups.

The scope of the simulation is impressive. Prior to the actual start of play, the user has the opportunity to select not only a site for the game, but also the time of year and the severity of the weather. Players will immediately notice tangible differences between a game in Dallas in September and one held in Green Bay in the dead of winter.

Besides regulation contests, *Mac Pro Football* allows the computerist to set up any desired game situation. This allows an armchair football analyst to study key plays from



GFL Football on the Apple, by Activision

actual games by replaying them. Would a different call have turned a failed drive into the winning touchdown? This is the only computer program that provides a way to find out!

David Holt's simulation substitutes multiple views of the action for a single, animated display. The graphics are not overly fancy, but the combination of side and overhead views adequately conveys the essence of every situation. The arrangement of information on the screen is very logical, which also promotes rapid play. Frills include an opening coin toss and the opportunity to call audibles at the line of scrimmage to confuse the defense. The officials call penalties, but, alas, there is no provision for declining one.

Mac Pro Football emphasizes play selection. Unlike some programs, however, there's at least as much to do on defense as when your team takes possession of the ball. Each play from scrimmage requires the offensive coach to make nine decisions and the defense coordinator to make ten. The menu-driven command control sys-

tem prevents the game from bogging down because of the number of available options.

Holt's stated aim in designing Mac Pro Football, was to realistically simulate gridiron action in the NFL. Football-crazy Macintosh owners will be enjoying the fruits of his success for many years.

Mind meets body: action-strategy games

Football (SubLOGIC) was an attempt by Quest, which designed Super Bowl Sunday, to follow up with something a little more sophisticated. They wanted a game which combined joystick-directed arcade-style action with statistical input.

The result was *Football*, originally published by SubLOGIC. *Football* provides users with fully



Electronic Arts C-64 Touchdown Football

rated, though fictitious, players. The computerist can stock a team with talent and then, using the joystick, direct it on the field against human or computerized opposition. *Football*, now available from Software Simulations, is unsurpassed when it comes to injecting statistical depth into action.

Despite its strengths, *Football* wasn't a hit. This horizontally-scrolling contest never gained the success its quality deserved. SubLOGIC, primarily known for *Flight Simulator* and related software, was not comfortable with a sports game in its catalog, so Quest, as Software Simulations, recently regained the title rights.

A pigskin preview

Improvements in the hardware have spawned a new generation of computer football games. Additional memory and high-resolution graphics are powerful tools for overcoming the problems which have plagued even the best of the earlier video- and computer-football games.

At least three major products are scheduled for release in time for

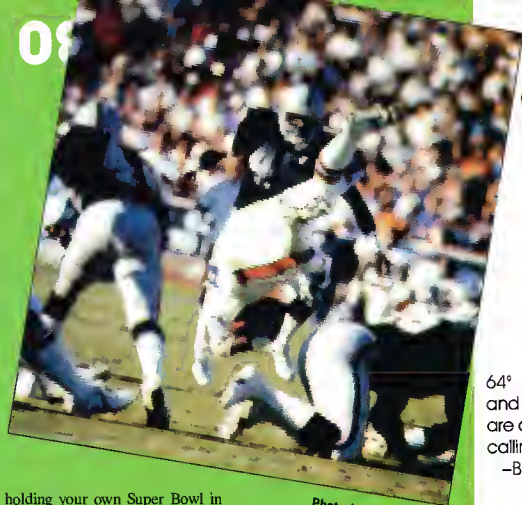
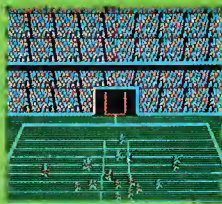


Photo by Louis Raynor

holding your own Super Bowl in January. Details are still a little sketchy, but advance word-of-mouth can only make a fan of computer football salivate in anticipation.

John Madden Football (Electronic Arts) is the gridiron equivalent of *Earl Weaver Baseball*. The tubby TV sportscaster is always available to players of this game who need sage advice in tough situations. *John Madden Football* has an extensive system for setting up a playbook which is reminiscent of



John Madden Football on the Apple by Electronic Arts.

World's Greatest Football Game. Thus, despite its stunning graphics, it may prove most popular with extremely knowledgeable fans.

Pure-Stat Football (Software Simulations) will be, its designers promise, the next step beyond its two previous attempts to simulate football. The new game features superior scrolling graphics and a very intricate statistical base. Ed Daniels, head designer at Software Simulations, believes this will be an especially good program for those who want to organize computer football leagues.



64° at night. A brochure and free demonstration are available from CSW by calling 1-800-321-5562.

-Bill Kunkel & Arnie Katz

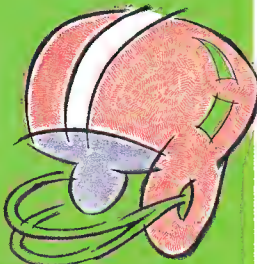
Facts and predictions

Not all football fans want to play simulated games. Some fans are more interested in statistics and projections, evaluating and analyzing past performance and using that data to estimate future success or failure. For those fans, we suggest Intracorp Inc.'s *Pro Football Facts & Predictions*, a fascinating gridiron database that encompasses the last four years of pigskin stats for every team in pro football.

Football bettors and stat mavens alike should get tremendous mileage out of this program, which produces everything from schedules and records (wan/lost, against the line, etc.) to player match-ups.

The program is designed to be user friendly and even computer neophytes will be rattling off statistical probabilities and results within minutes of booting up.

Pro Football Facts & Predictions is currently available for the Commodore 64/128 and IBM PC and compatibles.





by Arnie Katz

Brian Fargo may not be the Harvard Business School's idea of a young executive in the fast lane, but the 26-year-old Californian has a track record any budding middle manager would envy. His meteoric rise from video-game player to computer game creator, and the president of his own software publishing house, is another of the video- and computer-game business' entrepreneurial success stories.

Like many of today's top designers, Brian Fargo avidly played elec-

tronic games before he began to design new ones for the rest of us. The Atari 2600 became his favorite pastime when he was in junior high school in the late 1970s.

Of course, he couldn't stay happy with just playing other people's games for long. Right from the start, he wanted to get in on the action. "When I was in the eighth grade, I would sneak over to the high school," he says. "They had a PDP-11, I think it was." He pauses, savoring the memory of those forbidden after-school sessions

with the big clunky machine. “It had no screen, just printed output.”

Another student at the same school in Long Beach, California, was Michael Cranford, also destined to be a leading professional designer and programmer. "I introduced Michael, who was a boyhood friend of mine, to computers," recalls Fargo, "and he introduced me to *Dungeons & Dragons*." The two would eventually combine their talents with both of these interests as co-authors of the games in the "Bard's Tale" series of fantasy role-playing adventures published by Electronic Arts.

In 1979, the purchase of an Apple II home computer gave Brian Fargo his first real chance to do something about his yen to invent games. "It cost \$2,000 at the time," he recalls ruefully. "I taught myself to program from books. First I wrote code in BASIC, and then I moved on to Assembler."

Classics did not immediately leap from his keyboard. "You start so many things when you're first learning to program, but you don't necessarily finish them," he admits. Many adventure game ideas died, uncompleted, before he found a concept he wanted to carry all the way through the development process.



Labyrinth of Martagon, a multi-character text adventure, was his first game program. Characteristically, Brian immediately decided to try to sell his brainchild to the home computer world.

"We put it in baggies and sold it through computer stores in the area."

The exact sales figures have disappeared into the mists of history, but it is a safe bet that there weren't many of those little disk-laden bags. This prose fantasy quest would be an unusual collector's item for fans of Fargo's later works.

Many would-be publishers pursued the same entry-level strategy back in those relatively simple years of the early 1980s, but only a handful ever managed to move even one step beyond this starting point.

Fargo issued his second product under his own Saber Software brand name. *Demon's Forge* also came in a plastic bag, but that was about the only resemblance to *Labyrinth of Martagon*.

The new game mixed drawings with prose in a format like the illustrated adventure system which Roberta Williams pioneered with *Mystery Fun House* and *The Wizard and The Princess* (Sierra).

Although a professional artist drew the pictures for *Demon's Forge*, the graphics turned out to be Brian's biggest headache. "I finally had

to trace each of the drawings to get them onto the computer, and I'm no artist," he says.

Since Brian couldn't find anyone else to do it, he also wrote the plot himself. It concerned a mercenary who, after killing four guards, was sentenced to prove his mettle in a testing ground called the Demon's Forge.

The game brought him to the notice of a quartet of Stanford University graduates who bought out Saber Software and set up Boone Corporation, a design and programming house, with Fargo as vice president and creative spearhead.

"There are three stages in the life of a design group," Fargo notes. "In the first, you have to convince someone that you can do something, anything." The Boone Corporation tried to establish itself by

taking on jobs like *Crater Raider* for the VIC-20.

Brian also did an IBM version of Demon Forge, but the timing was wrong. The clone explosion didn't make MS-DOS machines the dominant force in the home market for another five years.

The Boone Corporation soon died, however, of a common disease in the computer business: projectitis. "There was a product called *The Golf Game* which was supposed to 'make' the company," Brian comments ruefully. "The company died before the game was finished." Several years later, an overhauled version was published by Activision.

It was roughly five years ago, November 1983, that Brian formed Interplay Productions. "The second stage is when you convince someone you can design and program a new game by actually doing it," says the Interplay president.

After warming up with a trio of educational programs for World Book, the new company turned its attention to illustrated adventures. Activision premiered *The Tracer Sanction* and *Mindshadow* on the same day, which may have been an unwise strategy. “Mindshadow outsold Tracer Sanction by about three-to-one, so maybe it hurt them to come out together like that.”

When Activision ordered a third illustrated adventure, a detective story, Fargo decided to turn teacher. "You folks write a lot about adventure games," he said to Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel, and Joyce Worley one evening at a Consumer Electronics Show, "I think you could write a game." Thus began Subway Software, the first design studio in the computer entertainment field.

Borrowed Time (Activision), written by Subway Software for Brian's revised and improved illustrated adventuring system, cast the player as Sam Harlow, a hardboiled 1930s private eye as quick with a quip as he is with a gun. The convoluted plot and atrocious packaging kept sales from reaching the best-seller level, but *Borrowed Time* has become a "cult classic" of sorts, still played and discussed by hardcore gamers.

Perhaps more importantly, it demonstrated Fargo's intention of moving away from parser-driven systems. Although the computerist could type in orders, Borrowed Time included an on-screen menu of the most commonly used commands, which allowed players to go for long stretches without hunching over the keyboard. The simple, intuitive interface would soon become an Interplay trademark on such games as *The Bard's Tale* and *Westland* (Electronic Arts).

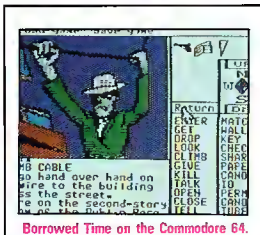
"Wizardry (Sir-Tech) was out there, of course, but *The Bard's Tale* was mostly inspired by Dungeons & Dragons," says Fargo of the genesis of his most celebrated creation. "In the back of the D&D rule book there was a dice version for generating encounters and rooms. We played that one a lot." Fargo designed and laid out the game, which was programmed by cocreator Michael Cranford.

"In all our games, we always try to achieve more than we are supposed to get out of the system," Fargo says. "Sometimes it makes

us miss our deadlines, but we always do more than expected." Pushing the limits of computerized fantasy role-playing was a prime motivation in the development of *The Bard's Tale*.

Fargo points to the colorful, animated graphics as the most personally satisfying aspect of the adventure. "We animated everything to create a lively screen." The variety of monsters, each with its own illustration, is another source of pride.

Of course, designers seldom experience total victory in their struggle



two additional installments of *The Bard's Tale* saga. Most recently, Brian explored a somewhat new direction with *Wasteland*, a science fiction role-playing adventure.

Brian believes that player satisfaction depends more on pacing than any other factor. This is reflected in *Neuromancer*, based on an award-winning science fiction novel. It is Interplay's first adventure published under a new affiliated label agreement with Mediagenic. "Even though it takes a while before the player can 'jack in' to cyberspace, there are a lot of things the player can do early in the game," explains Fargo.

The Interplay founder describes *Neuromancer* as "the first computer game about hacking." He explains that, while the main activity in *Hacker* (Activision) is not computing but trading items and solving a multi-part puzzle, *Neuromancer* is about "getting hardware and software, talking with sysops, and other computing stuff. There's no combat, no character attributes, as in other role-playing games."

Fargo describes *Battle Chess*, Interplay's other fourth quarter 1988 release, as "an idea dying to be done." He got the notion while watching the scenes in *Star Wars* which features the holographic board game.

Although the rules of *Battle Chess* are the same as in the classic strategy contest, each piece is fully animated. The queen, for instance, walks with an enticing wiggle, and destroys any piece she captures with lethal beams from her royal eyes. Todd Comasta,

who did the illustrations for *The Bard's Tale III*, drew the shapes for *Battle Chess*.

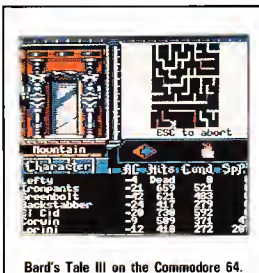
A single, eloquent sentence expresses the entire Fargo philosophy of game design. "We do everything for the most selfish reason in the world," he states. "We do the games we want to play." He feels that maintaining a constant level of enthusiasm and excitement about a project in development is a key to its eventual success.

And what kind of games does Brian want to play? A good game, he feels, has a variety of action, a lively pace, a believable premise, and a user-friendly interface. "A parser-based adventure shouts, 'This is a book' on every screen. Interplay will not be publishing any parser adventures," he adds with finality.

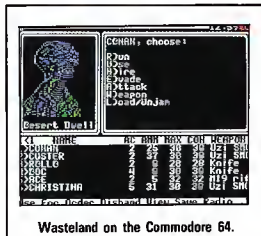
Maintaining a strong product focus is another key ingredient in the design process at Interplay. "When we start a project, we decide what kind of experience we want players of the game to have—and then we stick to it."

Like most cutting-edge creators in the computer entertainment field, Fargo looks beyond current projects to tomorrow's super-games. "The big difference in the games of the future," he theorizes, "will be the quality of the video, the quality of the audio." The games must look and sound even better to "make them easier for players to get into."

It's a safe bet that, when those fabulous programs eventually do see the light of day, some of the most fascinating ones will feature Brian Fargo's name on the credit screen.



Bard's Tale III on the Commodore 64.



Wasteland on the Commodore 64.

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Three Stooges

C i n e m a W a r e

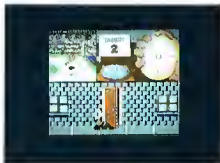
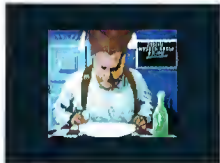
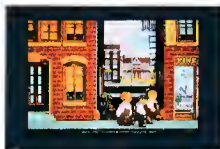
Versions: Amiga (\$49.95), Commodore 64 (\$34.95), IBM PC (\$49.95)

Little kids laugh at their cartoon-like antics, but the Three Stooges hold a special fascination for many otherwise sane adults because of their irreverence. Watching the slapstick squad puncture the pompous is catharsis. We can't tell off the teacher or the boss, but Larry, Moe and Curly do it for us, in their short subjects and feature films.

From the moment the first image appears on the monitor, it is clear that CinemaWare has preserved that spirit of irreverence in *Three Stooges*. The design team, led by Robert and Phyllis Jacob and John Cutter, has created an electronic board game that is positively guaranteed to thrill anyone who has ever said, "Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk!"

After an introduction so funny that it would rob players of a treat if described here, *Three Stooges* settles down to a story about the attempt by the trio to earn enough money in a month to save Ma's Orphanage. If they don't get the dough, Skin and Flint Finance Corp. will evict the children—and Ma's three sexy daughters won't show the boys their gratitude.

The player moves the boys along the main street of Stoogetown, which is sectioned into areas. It's a one-way thoroughfare, so missed opportunities are gone forever.



The Three Stooges come to your computer. Amiga screens are shown on the top row, Commodore 64 below.

The movement system utilizes a window above Moe's head with icons for each of the next six spaces. Moe's hand moves from square to square until the gamer stops it or time runs out. The Three Stooges immediately go to the square represented by the icon Moe's finger picks. The gamer then follows the on-screen instructions which appear when the boys get there. "Trivia" squares help or hinder, depending on the computerist's knowledge of Three Stooges lore. An excellent article in the written documentation gives us nonexperts the facts needed to breeze through the questions. Squares marked "Money" yield a quick-cash windfall, while landing on "Chance" may bring a bonus or penalty.

As momma said, it's not polite to point. If Moe picks a space containing a mousetrap, the player loses a precious day-turn and must return to the icon window to pick a new destination. With appropriate gruesomeness, Moe loses a finger every time he picks a mousetrap. If he runs out of digits, the game ends.

"The Slapping Game" can improve the odds of picking a good landing space. If Moe pounds enough sense into his brothers, the hand slows down in the movement phase. The skilled player should make mastery of "The Slapping Game" the top priority. It's much easier to plan each turn when the hand moves aren't zipping from square to square.

Some spaces offer jobs.

There's an action game for each job, and the player's earnings depend on how well the Stooges perform.

The graphics are fabulous. Tim Skelly's backgrounds of Stoogetown are only slightly less marvelous than the expressive animation of the three heroes.

Like all CinemaWare titles, *Three Stooges* is something computerists will use to show friends what their machine can really do. The sound track, like the graphics, is first-rate.

Three Stooges shares its sole weakness with 1987's blockbuster, *Defender of the Crown*. The individual action games are not as engaging as the overall structure of the game. *Three Stooges* is much better than *Defender of the Crown* in this regard, but there's still room for improvement.

Bob Jacob, CinemaWare's guiding light, always says that his games aim to provide the computerist with an enjoyable interactive experience. There is no question that *Three Stooges* succeeds admirably in this regard. It is, quite simply, one of the year's outstanding computer entertainment products. And doesn't everyone need at least a little irreverence?

—Arnie Katz

CinemaWare
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 495-6551



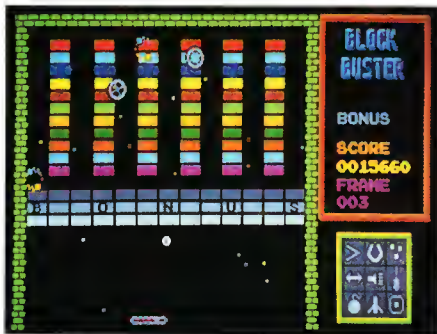
Blockbuster

M i n d s c a p e

Versions: Amiga (\$39.95), Atari ST (\$39.95), Commodore 64 (\$29.95), IBM PC (\$34.95)

Remember *Breakout*? This Atari game challenged players in the early '70s to clear away a series of multi-colored brick walls with a paddle and a bouncing ball, and it was the most successful of all the second-generation ball-and-paddle games. The ensuing years saw few attempts at updating this classic idea because the copyright to the ball-and-paddle play mechanic was carefully protected.

There was a breakthrough last year, however, when Taito's *Arkanoid* hit the coin-op arcades with several significant improvements on the wall-bashing theme. Sound and graphics were brought up to state-of-the-art levels. Next, a strategic dimension was added to these bricks by placing power icons inside certain bricks. An icon is released when one of these bricks is destroyed, and the player gets its power by catching the falling symbol. These special abilities slow the ball, turn one ball into three, or transform the paddle into a machine gun that fires brick-busting bullets. *Arkanoid* also introduced free-floating bombs; extra obstacles which periodically redirect the path of the ball. This keeps the game from falling into the ball-and-paddle version of gridlock, when the screen is nearly clear of bricks



Blockbuster on the Atari ST features excellent graphics, animation and game play, but its sound effects really enhance the game.

and the two available angles of deflection do not bring the ball into contact with the remaining targets.

Arkanoid has only reached the home market in video-game form (for the Nintendo Entertainment System), but take heart, dear friends, for there's actually something even better available now for home computers! *Blockbuster* (designed by Audiogenic Software Ltd.) takes *Arkanoid*'s innovations and adds a strategic wrinkle of its own: Icons are standardized and a menu is used to select powers or "weapons."

The first time an icon is caught, the initial weapon on the menu (which slows the ball) is highlighted. The player can engage that weapon at any time

as long as it remains highlighted, which it does until a second icon is captured. The second weapon (which magnetizes the paddle or bat) is then highlighted. This process continues until the ninth weapon. This throws a forcefield around the ball that cuts through bricks like a hot knife through butter. Unspent icons are cashed in for points at the completion of every playscreen.

The addition of the weapons menu makes *Blockbuster* at once simpler and more interesting than *Arkanoid*. For one thing, the player doesn't have to memorize nine different icons in order to identify which one they have just liberated from a brick. Strategically, it allows the player to select or work toward a

specific power, rather than being dependent on the random appearance of the desired weapon. *Blockbuster* also includes floating "aliens," which serve the same purpose as the bombs in *Arkanoid*. There are invisible and multi-hit bricks, and additional weapons such as Missiles (each destroys a vertical row of bricks), Smart Bomb (removes all on-screen aliens), Torch (lights up invisible bricks) and Wide (enlarges the bat). Every ten screens, the player is awarded a password which allows him to skip over the vanquished playfields in subsequent plays.

The best versions of *Blockbuster* are the Amiga and Atari ST, where the game's audio and visual potential are fully realized. These versions are also enhanced by mouse-play which is far preferable to a joystick. The Commodore 64 rollover is rather disappointing, with its washed-out colors and awkward joystick control. The IBM PC/Tandy 1000 version doesn't take advantage of graphic board technology to enhance its look, which is a shame. Let's hope this game inspires a new generation of upgraded classics from yesteryear.

—Bill Kunkel

Mindscape
3444 Dundee Rd.
Northbrook, IL 60062
(312) 480-7667.



Road Runner

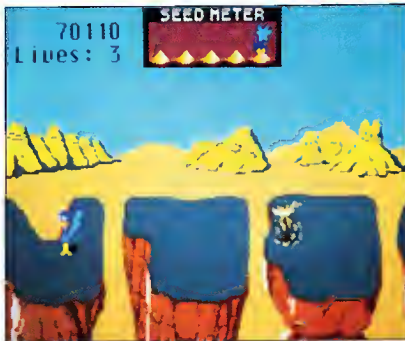
M i n d s c a p e

Versions: Atari ST (\$49.95), Commodore 64 (\$34.95)

Sometimes, when reviewing a program on more than one system, you feel like you're looking at more than one game. A perfect example of this software schizophrenia is Tengen's *Road Runner*. On the C64, this is an interesting if unspectacular action game with beautiful sprite animations but unimpressive backgrounds. On the Atari ST, however, *Road Runner* really gets up to speed!

The player controls the title character, the legendary creation of Warner Bros. animator Chuck Jones. The tiny bird speeds along a desert highway gulping down birdseed while avoiding rock slides, land mines, sand traps and oncoming traffic. But most of all, the *Road Runner* must stay out of the clutches of his eternally hungry nemesis, Wile E. Coyote.

A beautiful close-up of the game's star, wrapped in the distinctive bands of color of a thousand Warner Bros. cartoons, opens the game. The title character, seen from a three-quarters perspective, gets a head start on Wile E. and begins running to the left with the ardent predator on his heels. The *Road Runner* can move in any of four directions and can



The great graphics of the Atari ST version of *Road Runner*. The smooth joystick control can only be felt by playing the game.

even turn around, but the screen *only* scrolls to the left.

At the top of the screen is a "seed meter," which uses five bowls of birdfood to represent RR's speed and endurance level. Each time *Road Runner* misses a clump of seed, the RR in the speed meter moves down one bowl to the left and the on-screen bird slows down correspondingly. If RR misses five bowls he passes out and is captured by Wile E.

The player starts with five lives but wins extras by taking a shortcut to a higher level.

Road Runner is divided into a series of levels, which players should appreciate since it means losing a life doesn't deposit them back to the game's beginning.

The *Road Runner* can lure Wile E. into a traffic lane where he may be destroyed by an oncoming vehicle for bonus points. Bonus points are also awarded for drinking lemonade, jumping over a land mine and completing a level without missing any birdseed.

The best thing about this game, however, is the little

touches which come right out of the cartoons. The ST version is especially rich in these extras. For example, characters are given the pseudo-Latin designations so popular in the cartoons (Wile E. is labeled "Appetitus Giganticus" and RR is dubbed "Quickus Wittus" among other things).

Both versions equip Wile E. with a series of typical Coyote inventions, including a rocket, pogo stick, skateboard and booster jet. As in the cartoons, these aids can backfire on Wile E. if RR is sufficiently quick and clever. The C64 version includes *Invisible Paint* which renders RR invisible to Wile E. and vice versa.

The ST version is superior not only because of its beautiful graphics (including independently scrolling background scenery) but for its smoother joystick control. On the Atari screen, the *Road Runner* really seems to be moving. Although ST owners are in for a special thrill, either version of this cartoon classic should give *Road Runner* fans a real kick. —Bill Kunkel.

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Superstar Ice Hockey

M i n d s c a p e

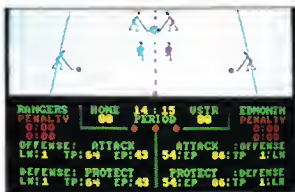
Versions: Apple II (\$39.95), Apple IIGS (\$44.95), Amiga (\$49.95), Atari ST (\$49.95), Commodore 64 (\$34.95), IBM PC (\$39.95)

Hockey fans everywhere, rejoice! After years of being the most neglected of sports buffs, we at last have an action-strategy simulation that offers all the thrills and nuances of real ice hockey! Ed Ringler's *Superstar Ice Hockey* is a masterpiece. Set in a three-screen wide, horizontally scrolling rink seen from a three-quarters perspective, *Superstar Ice Hockey* breaks new ground in terms of integrating strategy and action.

Players begin by familiarizing themselves with the SportTime Hockey League and its four five-team divisions. The user controls the "expansion" Mindscape franchise which starts in the West Conference, Division 2. A series of options allows the human coach to read League History (won-lost records), view a specific team history, reset the League, set up new lines or play a game. Players are evaluated based on their age and ratings in offense, defense and total skill. At the end of each season, a team can be sent to training camp to improve. The worse a team performs in any season, the greater the number of trading points awarded to it. These points can be used to improve a team or to pay for



The IBM PC version offers lots of realism and exciting action, though not quite as good as the Commodore 64 version.



trades, since the League requires 150 points for each transaction.

The user then sets up the various game options (time, team colors, off-sides, etc.) and assigns the three control areas for each team. Team control is divided among the center, goalie and coach, with users offered a wide variety of possible setups. A single joystick makes coaching selections (which occur before each face-off) and controls either the center or goalie. However, the computer can handle any or all of the three

Superstar Ice Hockey on the Commodore 64. This translation of the game is especially well done.

zone) or play normally. The coach must closely monitor his team's fatigue level by checking the EP (Effective Power) rating since players possess varying levels of endurance.

Superstar Ice Hockey brings rink thrills home, with play on several levels. Gamers can simply control the center-forward or goalkeeper, leaving strategy (line changes, checking assignments, etc.) to the computer. Or he might start out as coach and let the computer carry the puck. Eventually, as the user becomes more familiar with the game, he can take greater advantage of *SIH's* amazing depth. Pretty soon, he'll be not only dazzling other teams with his on-ice skill but with his trading and coaching acumen as well.

All versions of of this sports simulation are excellent, but the Commodore 64 translation is especially exciting, with its full-bodied on-ice players and realistic animations. Any ice hockey fan, no matter what computer system he uses, will find *Superstar Ice Hockey* an exciting addition to the sports software library.

—Bill Kunkel

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Tetris

S p e c t r u m H o l o b y t e

Versions: Amiga (\$34.95), Apple II (\$39.95), Apple IIGS (\$39.95), Commodore 64 (\$24.95), IBM PC (\$34.95), Macintosh 512 and SE (\$34.95), Macintosh II (\$39.95)

There's only one possible way to start a review of this fascinating strategy game, so let's get to it: The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!

Yes, *Tetris* comes to American home computers courtesy of those code-crunching comrades at the Computing Centre of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences (Academy Soft) in Moscow. It was conceived by researcher Alexey Pazhitnov and programmed by 18-year-old Moscow University student Vadim Gerasimov.

The Apple IIGS, Amiga, Macintosh, and Atari ST editions have a tournament mode which allows up to six players to compete, but *Tetris* is essentially a solitaire pastime. Fans of recent hits like *Shanghai* (Activision) and *Solitaire Royale* (Spectrum Holobyte) will find *Tetris* to be similarly contemplative, but with a lot more action.

An empty rectangle fills the center portion of the *Tetris* display and represents the game's active playfield. The background shows cases noninteractive, full-screen drawings of the Soviet people and their achievements in fields such as sports and outer space.

Various shaped pieces drop, one at a time, from the top of the rectangle. While they fall toward the bottom, the player employs



Tetris on the Macintosh (above, left), PC in CGA (above) and Mac II (left), a riveting game from behind the Iron Curtain.

keystroke commands to move the piece left or right, rotate it or speed up its descent. When contact with a border or another piece stops the active piece's downward progress, it freezes in place.

Players earn points for each piece placed until they are piled high enough to violate the top boundary of the active display. When this happens, the game ends. If the total is high enough, it can be enshrined on "The Top Ten Comrades" screen. Scores achieved when the "advanced" mode is in effect, which doubles the falling speed of the pieces, are shown in bold.

The most important tactic is to assemble complete horizontal rows. When a row is totally filled, it disappears from the rectangle,

dropping all previously frozen pieces above it one line closer to the bottom. Making lines greatly raises the player's scoring potential, because it increases the number of pieces which can be placed without filling up the rectangle and ending the round.

The Selection Screen, which appears prior to the start of the play, offers three main options. The computerist can select the level of difficulty (1-10), the height (1-7) of the bricks already in the active display at the start of the game, and whether or not the Advanced Mode is active.

Adjusting the height is a good way to boost the difficulty factor when starting with an empty rectangle isn't challenging enough. Since *Tetris* is a subtle puzzle

game with many strategic nuances, don't expect to reach this exalted level of expertise too quickly.

The screen background consists of full-size, excellent illustrations which depict Soviet people, places and notable achievements. Russian music begins playing when the game boots, to set an appropriate mood.

Several help features are available through menus. Many players will want to use "next," which shows a small picture of the next shape before it drops. Those making a real study of *Tetris* should use the statistics option. It shows how frequently each piece has occurred in the game.

Too often, the internationalization of the entertainment software business has meant cheap, foreign clones of popular U.S. games. *Tetris* is a laudable exception; a game with charm and challenge enough to keep usually jaded gamers riveted to the screen for hours of enjoyable, if occasionally frustrating, entertainment. And if it's a fair sample of what we can expect from Academy Soft, then let's hope that the Russians come again—and soon.

—Annie Katz

Spectrum Holobyte
2061 Challenger Dr.
Alameda, CA 94501
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Rommel: Battles for North Africa

S t r a t e g i c S t u d i e s G r o u p

Versions: Apple II (\$39.95), Commodore 64 (\$39.95)

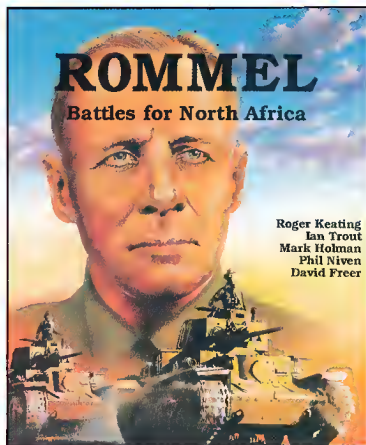
The outcome of the battle is not the sole criterion for judging the worth of the generals who fought it. Robert E. Lee lost more often than he won, and even Napoleon met defeat at the hands of the Duke of Wellington, yet both are highly respected by military historians.

A more recent example is Field Marshal Irwin Rommel, Germany's feared "Desert Fox" in World War II. His undeniable brilliance and his known disdain for the Nazi ideology have made him one of the most glamorous figures of that terrible conflict.

Australia's Roger Keating and Ian Trout have applied their Battlefield game system to the Desert Campaign during the March 1941 to June 1943 period. Historical battles covered by the disk's library of scenarios are: Syria, Sidi Rezegh, Cauldron, Alem al Halfa, Kasserine Pass, Malmassy and Tebourga Gap. There is also a scenario for the hypothetical invasion of Malta.

Each scenario can be played between two human commanders, a human against the computer or with the machine administering the forces of both armies. The documentation offers "what if?" variants for most scenarios.

Experienced war gamers can even make up their own scenarios to cover other actual



Packaging for Rommel: Battles for North Africa. This game deserves a Medal of Honor among war games.

and imaginary engagements. The program includes Warplan and Warpaint, utilities for constructing new games with *Rommel: Battles for North Africa* and the other titles in this series.

The basic unit in the game is the battalion. The largest scenario puts the gamer in control of about 60 battalions, the equivalent of three divisions or one corps. A scenario lasts up to 99 turns (25 days) and takes two to five hours to complete solitaire, a little longer against another human participant.

To issue orders, the armchair

general highlights choices on a set of interlocking menus with the cursor keys. Players enter commands for each unit, telling it how corps headquarters wants it to move and fight. One turn in the game equals approximately six hours of real time. When units on both sides have received their instructions, the program reports the net result of both sides' actions.

Rommel is a very complex and detailed game which asks the electronic general to weigh many factors in each situation. Novice and slightly experienced

war gamers might do better with a less thorough simulation, though experienced strategists need look no further to find the cream of the war-gaming crop.

The documentation includes a 72-page manual, a pair of two-sided command summary cards, which cover both the game and the Warplan construction module, and beautifully rendered hexagonal maps in full color for each scenario. The rule book has three meaty sections: a lucid description of play accompanied by a tutorial, a rundown of each of the eight scenarios and instructions for creating new battles with Warplan and Warpaint. This may well be the best collection of player aids ever distributed with a war game.

Strategic Studies Group's games are as good or better than those published by the top manufacturers of nonelectronic military board games. Aided by the power of the computer, Trout and Keating's programs portray warfare with uncompromising accuracy, without increasing the burden on the players. *Rommel: Battles for North Africa* is a Medal of Honor winner among electronic war games. —**Arnie Katz**
Strategic Studies Group
Distributed by Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Dr.
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171



Bubble Ghost

A c c o l a d e

Versions: Amiga (\$34.95), Apple IIGS (\$34.95), Atari ST (\$34.95), Commodore 64 (\$29.95), IBM PC (\$34.95)

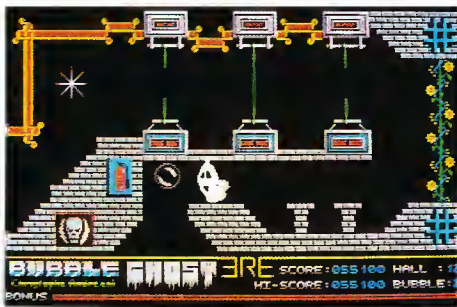
Some action games require hair-trigger reflexes, which limit their audience to joystick jocks with frantic fingers. Others, like *Bubble Ghost*, stress timing, angles and on-the-fly strategy. Only contests in the latter category, assuming they are also good games, ever become known as "classic fun for the whole family."

The universal appeal of *Bubble Ghost* may be its most notable feature. The goals and play mechanics are so easily understood that even a small child can play, yet they are also intriguing enough to entertain experienced computer gamers.

Designed and programmed by Infogrames in France, this one- or two-player game teams the player with a slightly cantankerous ghost. Although Heinrich Von Schtinker, inventor of the electric bubble pipe, died while testing his brainchild in the bathtub, his shade still haunts the 35 rooms of his quirky castle.

Death has not dimmed Von Schtinker's love of those airy little spheres. The only way to exorcise the ghost and send the screw-loose scientist to his deserved rest is to help the ghost steer a bubble through all of the castle's 35 rooms.

The joystick rotates the ghost clockwise or counterclockwise



Pictured above on the Atari ST system, *Bubble Ghost* stresses timing, angles and on-the-fly strategy.

and moves it around the screen in any direction. Pressing the action button causes the spook to blow a puff of air in whatever direction it is facing. These little gusts push the bubble around the screen. Blowing too hard makes the ghost temporarily run out of breath and turn red.

The ghost is totally invulnerable and can touch or pass through any object in the castle. The bubbles are another matter. The slightest contact with anything except the ghost bursts the fragile sphere and earns the computerist a dirty look from the white-sheeted spirit.

The faster the computerist completes a room, the greater the bonus score. A shrinking horizontal line just beneath the active display counts down the

remaining time.

The 35 rooms, each of which fills an entire display screen, aren't like the ones at your house. Each has tricks and traps which can quickly exhaust the player's starting supply of five bubbles. (The player earns extra lives for finishing five levels, starting at the end of room number five.)

Naturally, the traps become more and more fiendish as the player works through the levels. Hazards include burning candles, narrow passageways, fans and moving spikes. Some rooms contain additional, secret doors. If he leaves the screen through such an exit, the ghost skips ahead to a higher level, bypassing one or more trap rooms in the process.

A "practice" mode, selecta-

ble from a menu prior to play, lets the user work on any room except number 35. It's a real frustration-saver too. In many games which lack this feature, the player can get stuck on one level and have to repeatedly play all the ones before it. Is there anything more boring than "solving" the same puzzle for the 20th time?

The playfields are well-drawn and, in general, very attractive. Although the graphics aren't as spectacular as the same outfit's *Captain Blood* (Mindscape), they are quite clever. *Bubble Ghost*'s irresistible gallic charm more than makes up for the lack of mind-blowing eye-appeal.

The only thing *Bubble Ghost* lacks is a playfield construction module so that devoted bubble-heads could build their own tricky rooms. Perhaps this will give *Accolade* a good excuse to order a sequel.

Bubble Ghost is not a game which leaves players breathless after a grueling session. It is a leisurely contest which favors restrained use of the ghost's air puffs and a light hand on the joystick. It is truly classic fun for the whole family and should not be missed.

—Arnie Katz

Accolade
550 S. Winchester Blvd. #200
San Jose, CA 95128
(408) 985-1700

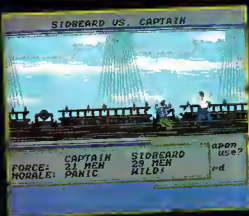
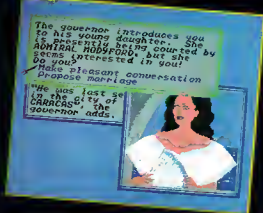
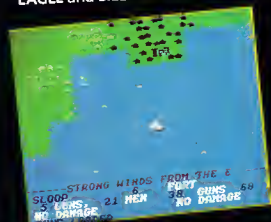
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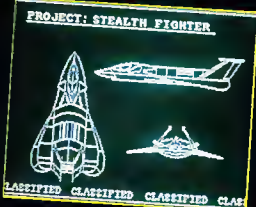
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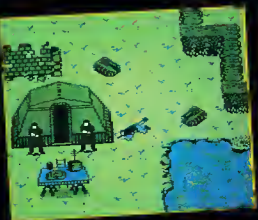
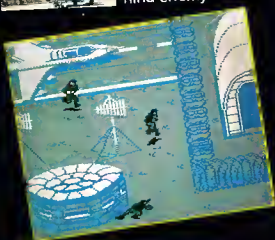
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Stellar Crusade

Strategic Simulations, Inc.

Versions: Atari ST (\$54.95), IBM PC (\$49.95)

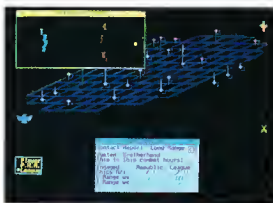
When the Terran peace-keeping fleet left the Kiffryn's Cat star cluster in the early portion of the 24th Century, the already stormy relations between two factions in the region quickly escalated to armed hostilities. The People's Holy Republic, fearful of encroachment by militant interstellar capitalism, declared holy war against The League.

That's the situation at the beginning of *Stellar Crusade*, Norman C. Koger Jr.'s one- or two-player strategy game of space exploration and conquest. The computerist commands The League in its battle for survival against the P.H.R. The descendants of Christian Marxists from Central and South America can be directed by another human player or the machine.

The ability of the computer commander is adjustable before the start of play. The choices run from "pushover" to "hideous." It is even possible to select "random" skill. This causes the computer to secretly assign a level to the robot foe.

With a couple of minor exceptions, commands are entered with the mouse. A turn, which represents three months of real time, consists of six interlocking phases. The "save game" opportunity is followed by the economic phases, then the

Though well done, *Stellar Crusade* offers little in the way of innovation or startling graphics.



Atari ST version (left), IBM PC screen (above)

movement phases and finally the portion of the turn which reports the results of all actions taken during the turn.

At the discretion of the participants, *Stellar Crusade* can simulate the "fog of war" with hidden movement. A prompt appears when it is time for players to switch places so that the player not issuing orders cannot see the opponent's moves on the screen. The documentation quite properly suggests that players acquire some familiarity with the game before using this option.

The economic phase allows each side to improve technology, build spacecraft and strengthen the productivity of

the planets within its sphere of influence. Movement is primarily used to explore and colonize new systems, and to attack and defend those which are already occupied.

A system of maps and charts keeps players informed about their budding empires. The point-and-click command system makes it easy to allocate resources, dispatch transports and conduct battles.

The graphics are adequate rather than eye-popping. They present the vital information without frills. SSI could embellish the ambience of its games with a few more frills, but *Stellar Crusade*'s visuals certainly commu-

nicate the necessary data.

If the premise and routine-of-play sound familiar, they should. Several games including SSG's classic *Reach for the Stars* have covered much the same territory. There's more emphasis on combat than colonization in *Stellar Crusade*, but neither aspect is fully realized. The lack of originality is particularly disappointing in a computer strategy game that is priced comparably to "cutting edge" titles.

Scott Bayless' rule book is, as usual for SSI, a model for other strategy game publishers to emulate. It covers all the rules, the "future history" of the universe which underlies *Stellar Crusade*, extensive designer's notes, strategy hints and full particulars on each of the six scenarios. At the very least, gamers owe him a debt of gratitude for not expanding the introduction from its actual four paragraphs to novelette length.

Speculation about the nature of wars in the future is at least as fascinating to many as studying conflicts of the past. Although *Stellar Crusade* explores little fresh territory, it is a solid, playable strategy contest.

—Arnie Katz

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Mountain View, CA 94043
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The Last Ninja

A c t i v i s i o n

Versions: Apple IIGS (\$39.95), Commodore 64 (\$34.95), IBM PC (\$42.95)

The *Last Ninja* is basically a martial-arts movie, and as with all good chop-socky epics, this game has a prelude (mercifully off-screen) in which the evil "Shogun Kunitoki and the Ashikaga Clan" not only murder the protagonist's father, brother and friends, but blow away his entire ninja brotherhood (the Mystic Shadow Warriors). So it's off to Lin Fen the sacred island of the Shadow Warriors, now under the domination of this oriental Clanton Gang, for some bloody revenge.

The journey to the inner sanctum of the evil Shogun takes the player through six zones, from the Wastelands to the Wilderness, the Palace Gardens, Dungeons, Palace and Inner Sanctum. Along the way, the player battles flunkies from the Ashikaga Clan and collects weapons, objects and magical items. Weapons include Nun-chukus, swords, smoke bombs, claws, magic gloves, staffs and shuriken stars. Magic items include sleeping potions, an amulet, mystical apples which grant bonus lives and the scrolls that signal the end of the quest. There is also a rope, a pouch (for carrying small objects), a key and a flower.

The graphics are very impressive, even in CGA mode, with each territory made visually dis-



Impressive graphics help make *The Last Ninja* a better-than-average chop-socky epic game.

tinctive within an overall Oriental style. The playfield includes the main display, an enemy status line, a weapons window (indicates the weapon just found, collected or in use), inventory, weapons, bonus lives and player energy level.

How important is a control system to a game? System 3 Software's colorful action-adventure (IBM PC version by Peter Fokos) should have been one of the year's standout games, but an awkward movement system takes a lot of the fun out of playing it.

In fairness, the game was clearly meant to be played with a joystick, where the system is merely confusing. Any ideas about playing this game via the keyboard, however, are best for-

gotten. Even Activision's technical staff had a tough time explaining how to use the keyboard to change the direction which the ninja faces. The instruction booklet says things like: "To change the direction the *Last Ninja* is facing...press the appropriate keys on the numeric keyboard." These mystical keys are not revealed to us, alas. Perhaps sufficient meditation will enlighten, until you just *know* which keys are appropriate.

Here's the problem: to give the game more of an adventure ambience, *The Last Ninja* was designed from a diagonal rather than a vertical/horizontal perspective. Pathways are shown as a series of right angles viewed from a two-thirds over-

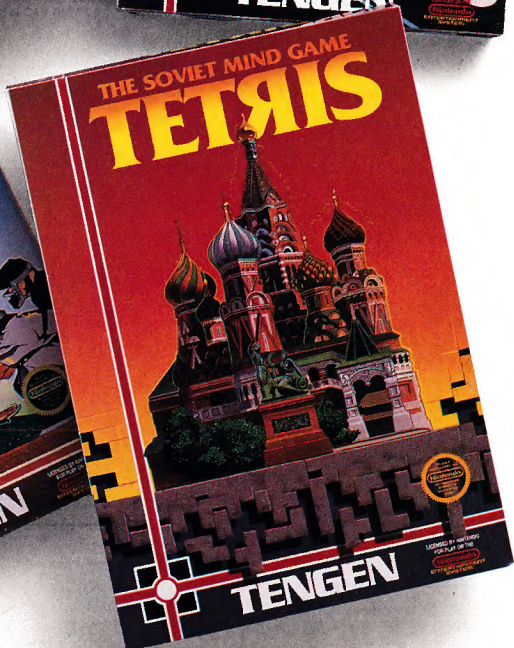
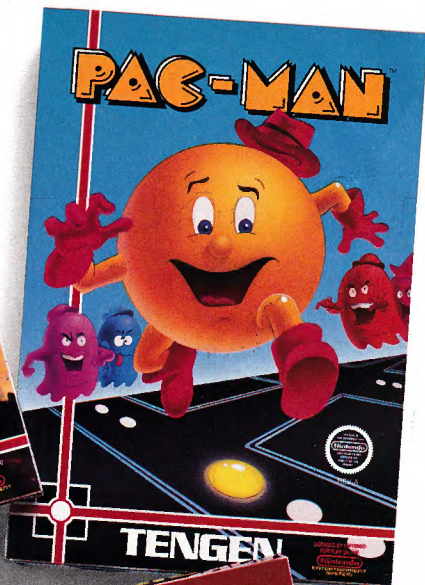
head viewpoint. When the ninja is moving straight down the road, therefore, from an objective viewpoint he's actually travelling diagonally.

Why lay out the game this way? So the player can have the dubious pleasure of stumbling over the maze-like roadways and getting lost. While map-making is an ancient and honorable element of adventure games, it adds little, if anything, to an action-oriented game like this. And as a trade off for the baffling control system, it's not a great deal.

The joystick not only moves the ninja along, it must also turn him around to face a new direction, pick up objects and communicate a series of combat moves. And it's a struggle every inch of the way. The system never becomes natural to the user and remains an impenetrable obstacle between player and game.

The *Last Ninja* has a lot going for it, but with its clumsy control system it also has a lot going *against* it. In order to turn the ninja around, he has to constantly move in a circular motion with the player stopping when the correct direction is attained. In many ways, the user is also going around in circles as he strives to overcome this annoying handicap.—**Bill Kunkel**

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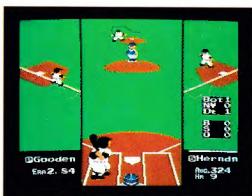
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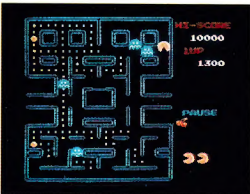
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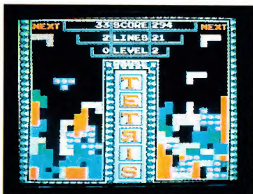


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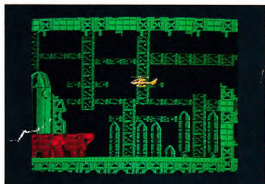
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